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Albert Blest

Dublin, Published by William Curry, Junr & Co.

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11



A MEMOIR
OF
THE LATE ALBERT BLEST,

FOR MANY YEARS AGENT AND SECRETARY FOR IRELAND

OF THE
LONDON HIBERNIAN SOCIETY.

BY THE
REV. MAIBEN C. MOTHERWELL, A.B.
Curate of Tamlaght O'Crilly, diocese of Derry.

DUBLIN
WILLIAM CURRY, JUN. AND COMPANY.
LONGMAN, BROWN, AND CO. LONDON.
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1843.



DUBLIN

PRINTED BY J. S. FOLDS, SON, AND PATTON,
5, Bachelor's-walk.

TO THE MOST NOBLE
GEORGE HORATIO,
MARQUESS OF CHOLMONDELEY,

Esq. &c. &c.

PRESIDENT OF THE LONDON HIBERNIAN SOCIETY.

MY LORD,

The permission to dedicate the following memoir to a nobleman, who is not ashamed to cast his coronet at the Saviour's feet, is a highly-cherished privilege. Although personally unknown to your Lordship, the unserved confidence reposed in my principles as a clergyman of the Established Church, demands a respectful expression of my gratitude. After a lengthened and efficient superintendence of the London Hibernian Society, over which your Lordship has so long and so honourably presided, its late venerable agent now rests from his labours, and his works do follow him. I

rejoice that your Lordship still lives to lend the aid of your exalted rank and Christian character, to promote the cause of scriptural education ; and that, after the lapse of many years, you may be found occupying your present important position as the benevolent friend of Ireland, is, my Lord, the sincere wish and fervent prayer of

Your Lordship's most obliged and faithful servant,

MAIBEN C. MOTHERWELL.

HERVEY HILL, KILREA.
March, 1843.

P R E F A C E.

THE author at length presents the following memoir to the Christian public. Ministerial engagements, and the extreme difficulty of condensing the voluminous materials placed at his disposal within the limits of a small octavo volume, must plead his apology for the delay which has occurred in the fulfilment of his announced intention. If it had been considered advisable to publish it in a more enlarged form, much interesting matter which is now either curtailed or omitted, might have been given at greater length; and what the author has been obliged to convey in his own language, might have been given more diffusely, and with much less labour, in Mr. Blest's words. In the latter years of his life, he was anxious to put on record his early recollections; but the rapidly increasing failure of sight prevented him committing

them to paper, and he had them, from time to time, taken down by another. This circumstance will account for the colloquial style of many of his observations. The author, during a visit to Dublin in the autumn of 1834, had frequent opportunities of listening with much interest to similar details, and witnessing the animation of youth commingling with the infirmities of old age, whilst his expressive countenance was seemingly irradiated with the brightness of approaching glory.

As Mr. Blest's personal history refers to a by-gone era of religious exertion, the principal actors engaged in which subsequently adopted sentiments so diametrically opposed to each other as to prevent any further co-operation; the author, however unwilling, had to enter into an examination of the discordant opinions adopted by them. He would have gladly abstained from an investigation so unpleasant to his own feelings, as involving an apparent hostility towards individuals for whom he entertained much personal respect; but, under the circumstances in which he was placed, he considered he had no other alternative.

At the commencement of this religious movement, Erastian principles on the subject of church government very generally prevailed

among seriously-minded persons; and yet but a few years had elapsed, when a punctilious observance of the most trifling regulations, was made the test of fellowship with the party which the late Rev. John Walker collected around him. Extremes are said to meet; and in the case before us, we have but a single step between the most unbounded liberality and the most circumscribed bigotry. The author had long wished to see the religious sentiments and practices of the period under review fully discussed; and although the biographical memoirs of the late Rev. Messrs. Mathias and Roe allude to them, he does not regret having given the comparatively lengthened, though still imperfect sketch contained in the following pages.

The spiritual destitution which then existed, has been succeeded by more favourable circumstances, which have permitted attention to be turned to the ecclesiastical polity of the Established Church; and although some have latterly merited, to a considerable extent, the imputation of sacrificing the peculiar principles of Protestantism to an external union, embracing within its range sentiments and practices inconsistent with the word of God, more defined views have superseded the extreme laxity of

opinion on such subjects which characterized that day; and the result is, that *piety* and *dissent* are no longer viewed as inseparably connected. Discussion has elicited scriptural arguments in support of episcopacy; and the recent erection of colonial bishoprics has presented to the world that form of church government in close resemblance to primitive times, when the church was similarly engaged in the conversion of the gentile nations. The rapid prosperity of the American episcopal church has also afforded a practical illustration of the efficiency and decorum of prelatic polity, without the adventitious aid of the civil power.

The facts recorded in the following memoir, in common with the biographical works already mentioned, fully prove that it is to the revival of the doctrines of the Reformation we are to attribute the prosperity of our national church; and that it is alone in our faithful maintenance of them, we can expect the divine blessing to rest upon her. It is, therefore, the duty of her members, lay as well as clerical, to withstand every, even the slightest, encroachment on that *protest against popery* to which she owes the restoration of her ecclesiastical privileges, and her present existence as a distinct and independent compartment of the church—catholic.

Her reformers represent her, in the twentieth article, as the *witness and keeper of holy writ* ; so that the preservation of apostolic doctrine is an equally paramount duty, as that of the divine institution of her ministry. ' To be faithful in all things, her clergy must view these two characteristics as indissolubly united ; and make full proof of their ministry by keeping that which is committed to their trust.

To prevent diversity of opinions and practices, the church has adopted articles of faith and liturgical formularies ; and it is on a full and distinct recognition of both, that she accepts the services of individuals who seek admission into her sanctuary. She also expects from them a conscientious observance of her own rubrics ; so that they violate their solemn engagements when they turn aside either to Rome or Geneva, by reviving forms which she has discarded, or abrogating any which she has ordained.

But let us at all times recollect with feelings of deep humility, and entire dependence on Him " without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy," that when the adorable Redeemer visited his temple in the days of his flesh, he found its rites and ceremonies scrupulously attended to ; and yet we have good reason to believe that the glory of the Lord had departed.

Let us, therefore, beware of incurring a similar condemnation. We may possess a regularly-constituted priesthood, the ark of the covenant containing the tables of God's law, and sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; but if the cloud of the divine presence overshadow not our mercy-seat, *Ichabod* will also be written on all our ministrations. It will not avail us to join in the acclamations of exulting pride when we contemplate our manifold privileges:—"The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these!" and at the same time neglect our momentous obligations. "Where much is given, much will be required;" and it, therefore, becomes us to be constantly and faithfully engaged in our Master's work. Satan is an ever active foe, whose hostility, both as to its *nature* and *extent*, is regulated by existing circumstances; assailing the church either through the violence of avowed enemies, or the treachery of professed friends: but it is our duty not to desert her. The Lord has been "a wall of fire" around her in the day of her comparative inactivity; and when in obedience to his command, she cast away her spiritual sloth, she dwelt in perfect security, even in the midst of the fiercest persecution—her exalted Head sympathized with her, and brought her forth unscathed

from the fiery furnace. She may, indeed, have been despoiled of a portion of her temporalities; but she preferred the maintenance of her integrity to a dishonourable compromise of principle. But let us always bear in our recollection, that whilst "militant here on earth," she is in a state of imperfection; and although, like the luminary of night, she may frequently present dark spots on her disc, and even to human view occasionally disappear, yet whilst the light of the Sun of righteousness is reflected by her, she will revolve in her appointed orbit, until the consummation of all things shall have summoned her redeemed children around the throne of God.

The principles and system of the London Hibernian Society, of which Mr. Blest was so long the efficient agent, necessarily occupy a prominent place in the following memoir. Ireland owes an incalculable debt of gratitude to that educational institution. A disunited population afforded an easy prey to former invaders, whose object was, to obtain possession of her verdant hills and fertile valleys, and their conquests were achieved by fire and sword; but the London Hibernian Society approached our shores with the olive branch of peace in the one hand, and the lamp of divine truth in the other,

to heal the religious and political* dissensions of her people, and cause "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ," to dissipate the spiritual darkness which enveloped the land. It acted on the firm conviction that the Bible was the only foundation of faith and practice, and that its sacred contents, when accompanied by the divine blessing, were, even from the first dawns of youthful intellect, able to make wise unto salvation.

* The following interesting anecdote is told in the Report for the year 1809, page 19 :—

"A gentleman mentioned to a Roman Catholic the importance of reading the Scriptures, and that the knowledge of them was conducive to present and eternal happiness. He referred to, and explained, some of the doctrines of Christianity. The Roman Catholic, after a considerable pause, and with a degree of surprise and energy, said—'If I believe these things, I *cannot* be a *rebel* !'"

Loyalty, founded on scriptural principles, is one of the objects which the society has always had in view, and its agent gladly co-operated with the Rev. William C. Armstrong in the formation of a school in the county of Sligo gaol (the first of that description in Ireland), which, notwithstanding the opposition given to it by the Romish bishop of Elphin, and many of his clergy in that locality, was productive of the happiest results in several instances of culprits, who declared that, if they had been acquainted with the Scriptures from their youth, they would not have been then placed in circumstances of degradation, as violators of the laws of their country.

The society commenced its labours at a period of religious apathy ; and the extracts, given from its earliest official documents, exhibit the enlightened and extensive views entertained by its founders. And it is well worthy of remark, that the very suggestions made by the deputation which visited Ireland in 1807, in their report, as likely to benefit the Established Church, point out the very line of conduct since adopted by her ministry, and which has proved so conducive to her welfare. At that time she was only awakening from a lengthened slumber, and her spiritually-minded members gladly co-operated with pious individuals connected with dissenting communities, but whose motives were not influenced by the exaltation of party in the furtherance of a cause dear to the heart of every Christian patriot. The reader will perceive the reasons which induced the committee in London to restrict their operations to educational purposes, and that at a time when its members belonged to various religious denominations. The important letter, dated September 25, 1811, and addressed by Mr. Blest to Samuel Mills, Esq. the treasurer, no doubt tended much to the relinquishment of the *preaching* department. However feasible such operations might appear to well-intentioned persons, his

long experience enabled him to point out their inapplicability ; and the struggling existence since maintained by dissenting societies of that description, then set on foot in consequence of the resolution to which the conductors of the London Hibernian Society came, is a strong confirmation of the correctness of his views. His capacious mind soared above the influence of sectarian feelings, and viewed matters only in their relative bearings on general utility.

The Romish hierarchy were not slow in perceiving the injury which the society would inflict on their system, and every effort was made to oppose the schools established for the scriptural education of the peasantry. Denunciations loud and deep issued from every altar ; the artillery of the popish press was brought into full play ; and the interference of their political friends in the British senate resorted to, in order to crush so effective an engine of religious instruction. But unaided by parliamentary grants, or encouraged by the direct support of government, the society flourished ; and each succeeding year witnessed the rapid increase of its schools. The early patronage of the last Archbishop of Tuam—then Bishop of Elphin—was highly beneficial to it ; and his Grace's

munificent grants of copies of the New Testament, before its wants were so generously supplied by the British and Foreign Bible Society, enabled it to extend its operations. The parochial clergy and resident gentry of those districts which were the scenes of its labours, hailed with delight, and assisted with pecuniary contributions, the establishment of schools : and not a few of the Romish priests joyfully availed themselves of its system of education, and even privately solicited from Mr. Blest, copies of the holy Scriptures in the English and Irish languages for their own perusal. At one period, he was in frequent confidential communication with several individuals of that order, who were convinced of the errors of popery ; but whose faith did not enable them to brave the poverty and persecution, which an open profession of their real sentiments would entail upon them. The time, however, has not arrived when such things could be made the subject of detailed account. One instance may be adduced—that of the late Rev. T. W. Dixon of the county of Mayo, who was afterwards patronized by the present Primate, and appointed successively to the curacies of St. Peter's, Drogheda, and Jonesborough—both in the diocese of Armagh, as one whom Mr. Blest's faithful counsels

contributed to enlist in the ranks of Protestantism.

The political events of later years have prevented the ingathering of that abundant harvest of which these things were the promising first-fruits. The subject of education has unfortunately become one of the watchwords of partisanship; and in the strife which has ensued, the good work has been impeded: but the great Head of the church "*ever liveth*," and, in faithfulness to the promises of his word, will yet establish His spiritual kingdom on the ruins of superstitious delusions. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but in the end it will speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."—Hab. ii. 3. The London Hibernian Society has been an uncompromising witness for God; may the present negotiation with the Church Education Society, if brought to a favourable conclusion, enable the friends of scriptural education to bear an equally faithful testimony, whilst an alien from the spiritual commonwealth of Israel, whether Protestant or Romanist, exists in the land!

The author feels it unnecessary to apologise, for introducing in this place the following important extract of a letter forwarded to him by the Rev. Giles Eyre, rector of Kilmina, diocese

of Tuam, to whom it had been addressed by the Rev. Henry Martin, rector of Aughrim, diocese of Clonfert.

Aughrim, August 26, 1842.

. "I have really nothing to add to the many testimonials which have been already afforded to the well-working of the London Hibernian Society, and its peculiar adaptation to the spiritual wants of the poor of our rural districts. I say *spiritual* wants, for that which I most admire in the system pursued by that society, is the fact that it makes secular instruction subordinate to the communication of that knowledge, without which all learning is foolishness, and worse than foolishness. The grand error of the present day is, in my opinion, to raise the standard of secular instruction so high, that, generally speaking, we cannot obtain suitable masters to carry out the proposed systems, which, when carried out, will require in the minds of the recipients thereof, an increased stock of scriptural knowledge to serve as an antidote to mere human learning.

"The best proof I can afford of my opinion as to the society, is derived from the facts, that all the schools in this parish are still in connexion

with it ; and that I have been the district agent here almost since the formation of the society, and that I still take pleasure in affording my services to it.

“ I have met with many instances, not only of Roman Catholic children, but also of their parents, having become acquainted with the great truths of the Gospel, by means of the obligation imposed by the society upon its pupils to commit Scripture to memory, for which purpose the Testament was brought home to the houses of the poor, not to be laid on a shelf, but that the task might be frequently repeated, so that all in the house could hear at least the letter of the Gospel.

“ I was well acquainted with Mr. Blest . . . and considered him to be actuated by a catholic spirit, and ready to give the right hand of fellowship to all who worshipped God in the spirit, rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh.”

Such is the favourable testimony borne to Mr. Blest's character, by an individual who, as a fellow-townsmen, had from infancy known him personally. The observations on the general subject of education, and the particular system adopted by the London Hibernian Society, are

well worthy of serious consideration ; as resulting from the experience of a clergyman of long and honourable standing in the Church of Ireland.

From the size of this volume, the correspondence inserted in the appendix, is merely given as an *exposé* of his religious sentiments.* His official communications with the parent committee in London, during a period of twenty-seven years, contain much valuable information respecting passing events of a religious nature ; but interesting extracts from them have been published from time to time in the annual reports of the society. The author, however, does not hold himself responsible for every sentiment advanced by Mr. Blest ; the plan to which he adhered throughout, being the same as announced in the third chapter of the following memoir, namely, that in developing Mr. Blest's character, a single lineament ought not to be omitted, that the representation of it might be as *vraisemblable* as possible.

The author cannot refrain from expressing his deep sense of obligation to the Rev. J. S. Knox, vicar-general of Derry ; to the Rev. William

* Many of the letters, although written amidst the bustle of official duties, evince much talent and deep thought ; and contain very valuable information connected with the important subjects to which they refer.

Napper; the Rev. Giles Eyre; the Rev. Augustus Minchin; the Rev. Henry Hughes, London secretary to the parent committee of the London Hibernian Society; and Captain John Banks, R. N., for the kind interest they have taken in the following memoir. He now sends it forth into the world, fully conscious of its many imperfections, and will consider himself more than amply repaid for all the trouble and anxiety it has cost him, if, in the language of his much respected friend, the Rev Richard Jones Hobson, prebendary of Connor, "it will do much service to the cause of religion in general, and be an especial benefit to the United Church of England and Ireland, as setting forth the estimate which so holy and unprejudiced a servant of God entertained of our Zion."

Since the following memoir has gone to press, the Rev. John Burke, whose name appears more than once in its pages, has been removed to a better world. A fuller notice of him, than what delicacy would have permitted if still alive, will be found in the appendix.

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THE LATE REV. JOHN BURKE.

ERRATUM.

In page 99, line 19, for "*martyrdom*," read "*death*."

MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EARLY LIFE.

ALBERT BLEST was born on the 25th of April, 1755, in Sligo, the assize town of the county of that name, in the west of Ireland. His father, William Blest, was an Englishman, from the town of Leeds, who, having served many years in the army, ultimately settled in Sligo. While his regiment had been previously quartered there, he married Elizabeth, daughter of Albert Conyngham (a near relative of Sir Albert Cunningham, who, after having signalized himself at the battle of Aughrim, was killed by the Irish rebels near Collooney, on his way to relieve the Protestants of Sligo), and Barbara Ormsby, related to the respectable family of that name, in the county of Mayo.

During the first eleven years of Mr. Blest's life, his father remained in the service of his country, and the subject of this memoir was

entrusted to the care of Mr. and Mrs. Conyngham. They watched over his infancy with the most anxious solicitude: and to the latest moment of his life he entertained for their memory the strongest sentiments of grateful affection. Having had an impediment of speech, which was increased by the slightest mental excitement, he was permitted to gratify every childish wish; and the total absence of early discipline cherished a waywardness of disposition, which displayed itself in the irregularities of his youthful conduct, and which nothing but the powerful influence of divine grace could effectually eradicate.

Mr. Blest always spoke of his grandfather Conyngham as a man of cultivated mind, though of a reserved disposition, and as also possessed of much moral worth, and sincere piety. The Bible had been his constant companion, and its "great and precious promises" were the source of abundant consolation to his soul, amidst the awful solemnities of a dying hour. When he had reached the confines of time, his faith seemed lost in vision, and in the moment of dissolution he triumphantly exclaimed, as if beholding the unseen realities of an eternal world, "Thou sayest. I must come, Lord!—I will, and shall, O my

God!" His mother was the daughter of the venerable Archdeacon Smith, and grand-daughter of the Right Reverend Doctor Smith, Bishop of Killala ; and his father was barrack-master of the county of Mayo for several years previous to his death. From him he inherited a landed property near Foxford, in that county, but of which he imprudently disposed early in life. The sale was illegal, but the statute of limitations afterwards prevented Mr. Blest, as heir-at-law, recovering possession of it.

Upon Mr. Blest's parents becoming permanently resident in Sligo, in the year 1766, he was removed to their house ; and being an only child, the same baneful system of indulgence adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Conyngham, was continued. His attendance at school was entirely regulated by his own caprice, and no parental restraint whatever was placed on his conduct ; his mind was, at the same time, possessed of the most extensive capabilities, and the want of early education, so necessary to the full development of its intellectual powers, is much to be regretted. When brought to a saving knowledge of the Gospel, and endued with a right understanding in all things, his own good sense perceived the

deficiency under which he laboured, and his efforts to redeem his misspent time were to a considerable extent successful. External accomplishments, as ministering to his personal vanity, occupied more than a proportionate share of his attention, and in his acquirement of them, he was much encouraged by his parents, who viewed a fashionable appearance as quite essential to his future advancement in life. The evil effects of a neglected education soon manifested themselves. Being a handsome young man, of agreeable manners, his company was much sought after, and his associates being as wild and reckless as himself, he ran with them into every excess of riot. He impetuously rushed into a sinful course of life, which (if he had not been plucked as a brand out of the burning) would have terminated in the loss both of soul and body. His great musical talents became a snare to him, as inducing him to connect himself with an amateur club, composed of respectable young men then living in Sligo. With such sinful companions the measure of his iniquities would have been soon filled to overflowing; but there was one favourable feature in his case—his conscience never for a moment slumbered: it faithfully testified against his

transgressions of the divine law, and produced the most poignant remorse of mind ; but it did not, alas ! effect any permanent improvement of conduct.

A circumstance occurred during his boyhood well worthy of record, as illustrating the providential care of the Lord over individuals, who, in his own good time and way, are subsequently made the recipients of his converting and sanctifying grace. His parents had occasion to reprove him for some youthful misconduct, and his unsubdued spirit felt so indignant that he fled from their house, with the determination of either enlisting, or adopting some other mode of life, which would exempt him from all parental restraint. During his first day's wandering he was overtaken by a violent storm, which caused him to take shelter in a miserable country inn ; he entered its wretched kitchen drenched with rain, and benumbed with cold, and to his extreme mortification, found a smouldering heap of wet turf on the hearth. While in the act of kindling it into a flame, he was assaulted and driven from the fire by a drunken man, who at the moment entered the apartment. He retired to a corner, and reflecting over the imprudent step he had taken, he resolved, like the prodigal

son, to return home. Not wishing, however, that his restoration to his distracted parents should appear as a voluntary act on his part, he went to a relative in Sligo, and solicited concealment. The stratagem succeeded : private intelligence was promptly conveyed to his father, who lost no time in paying him a visit. With a joyful heart, though concealed under much apparent reluctance, he submitted on what he considered honourable terms. This inauspicious adventure quenched every desire of seeking his fortune in a similar way.

At a suitable age he was placed under the care of a Mr. Cope, who was in the linen business, and had an extensive bleaching establishment at Greenville, about eight miles from Sligo. After the expiration of his apprenticeship, he returned home unimproved in morals, and altogether careless of his eternal interests. At the same time possessed of a mind ardently attached to poetry, he was captivated by the sublimity of style which pervades the prophetic books of inspiration ; and that he might become more intimately acquainted with that portion of God's word, he purchased a pocket Bible, which he carefully perused.

Much about the same period, a message was sent

to him by his mother, on a Sabbath morning to hasten his preparation for church. The question occurred to his mind, "Why am I a churchman? Mr. — goes to mass because his parents are Papists. I must inquire into the matter." His subsequent history will develop the circumstances which led him to enter upon that solemn and momentous investigation; and the readers of this memoir will perceive the means employed by God to prepare him for that station of usefulness, which he so long and so honourably occupied.

CHAPTER II.

STATE OF RELIGION IN IRELAND AT THE PERIOD OF MR.
BLEST'S EARLY LIFE—HIS FIRST SERIOUS IMPRESSIONS
—HIS MARRIAGE, AND CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

REAL religion was about the middle of the last century in a very deplorable state in Ireland, and especially in the province of Connaught. Protestant ascendancy was certainly maintained with a high hand, but the inestimable blessings it secured were entirely lost sight of. The Protestant gentry of Connaught were, generally speaking, the descendants of the commissioned officers of Cromwell's army, located in that province subsequent to the usurper's blood-stained subjugation of Ireland. When the fervour of fanaticism had subsided, it was succeeded by a total disregard of sacred things. Moral responsibility was practically forgotten, and licentiousness reigned paramount in every grade of society. If an undefined horror of popery, irrespective of its soul-destroying opposition to the revealed will of God, had not placed an insur-

mountable barrier in the way, the colonists might have sunk into the debasement of Romish superstition. The penal laws were also in force, and caused nominal Protestants, when local circumstances permitted it, to attend more from political than religious motives upon the public ministrations of the Established Church, the outward frame-work of which only partially existed. Cromwell, in his war of extermination, had either untenanted or razed to the ground the many monasteries and other religious houses with which the country was studded, and their possessions in lands and tithes passed into the hands of lay impropiators. The only share of ecclesiastical property which fell to the Reformed Church of Ireland in Connaught (of which province we are more particularly speaking) was the miserable pittance of vicarial endowment. This unjust alienation necessarily caused an inadequate provision for a parochial clergy, and an union of small parishes was the inevitable consequence. An arrangement so prejudicial to the true interests of the church, left the population of entire districts without the benefit of her spiritual offices, and her uninstructed members, when destitute of her pastoral superintendence, had frequently recourse to the services of the

Romish priesthood. If we except the erection of charter-schools, the government of the day made no effort to evangelize the country, and the Episcopal watchmen of our national Zion, as a body slumbered at their posts, whilst popery was not merely riveting its trammels on the minds of its own deluded votaries, but also making extensive inroads on the domain of the Establishment. And it is in a great measure to this criminal apathy that false religion still continues so prevalent in Ireland, notwithstanding the great exertions which have been made since the commencement of the present century. Sedition was then in a state of abject subjection, and Romanism, as a political system, dragged out a miserable existence. If a strictly scriptural education had been universally adopted, and the Gospel faithfully preached throughout the land, blessed results would no doubt have ensued.

Another cause contributed to this sad state of things, as concerned the church at large. The wild religious extravagancies of the commonwealth had brought the genuine doctrines of the blessed Reformation into disrepute. Cranmer and his fellow-martyrs had drawn up their system of theology, not from the writings

of Luther and Calvin, but from the Bible. The standard of doctrine which they sealed with their blood, and left as an invaluable legacy to the Church of England, while it presents the unity of truth in all its compartments, possesses less of the scholastic niceties that mark the religious works of the Genevan divine, and towards the introduction of which many unsuccessful efforts were subsequently made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Towards the close of the reign of James I, and the commencement of that of his successor, Arminianism sprung up, and under the patronage of Primate Laud, widely extended its tenets in the church. In the politico-religious conflict which ensued, it put forth pretensions to monopolize the loyalty of the nation, and upon the downfall of the Commonwealth it became the popular creed of the pulpit. It was succeeded by a system of semi-Pelagianism, which, while it lowered the standard of the divine law, produced a corresponding laxity of conduct. Arianism and Socinianism occasionally, though, thank God, not frequently, intruded their votaries within the pale of the Establishment. But these pestilential heresies were not permitted to obtain a permanent footing. However, if the Lord had not had a blessing in store for our national church

she would have sunk beneath the overwhelming load of unfulfilled responsibilities both in faith and practice. Brighter days of spirituality and usefulness have since arisen upon her; and though such a state of things even in retrospect, be a subject of gloomy contemplation, yet we bless God that it now only exists in the records of history. Even in the most destitute periods of our church, the Lord left not himself without witnesses. Whitfield and Wesley were honoured by him to be the pioneers of a religious movement, the effects of which were extensively felt not merely throughout the United Kingdom, but also throughout the Protestant section of Christendom. While they prosecuted their erratic labours, a goodly band of zealous and devoted ministers was daily increasing in number, and usefully engaged within a circumscribed sphere of parochial avocations. Newton, Venn, Romaine, Cecil, Scott the commentator, and many others, took a prominent part in that religious revival, which has been since gradually progressing, until the day has at length arrived, when, to use the language of a pious dissenter, "it would be difficult to find a pulpit of the Established Church in which the Gospel is not faithfully preached."

About seventy years ago, Mr. Andrew Maiben, an eminent Christian, was an extensive and opulent merchant in Sligo. He had received his first serious impressions on the subject of religion in his native country, Scotland; and his doctrinal views were strictly Calvinistic. He, for some years after his settlement in Sligo, connected himself with the Wesleyan Methodists, although he did not agree in sentiment with them. He afterwards withdrew from them, but during life maintained a friendly intercourse with their preachers, many of whom were his frequent guests.

Having experimentally felt the sanctifying influence of vital godliness, he was anxious to communicate the same blessing to others. Under the impression of duty, he established a daily evening prayer meeting, in an apartment of a feudal castle, which had belonged to the royal family of O'Connor, Sligo, but which had been subsequently converted into a military magazine by the English government. These religious exercises were very numerous attended, and were the happy means of much spiritual benefit to many individuals. It is interesting to trace the events of an overruling Providence. Tradition pointed out the build-

ing in which this prayer-meeting was for so many years held, as a scene of bloodshed during the cruel massacre of 1641. The respectable Protestants of Sligo had been invited to a sumptuous entertainment by the O'Connor chieftain, and, as a proof of the sincerity of the Popish party, the Protestant and Roman Catholic guests were placed alternately at the dinner-table. In the course of the evening, by previous arrangement, on a certain signal from their host, his Irish vassals plunged their daggers into the hearts of their unsuspecting neighbours, whose lifeless bodies were speedily cast through a concealed trap-door into a vault beneath. Surely Cromwell's unrelenting severities, however unjustifiable in themselves, were but a providential requital for such awful atrocities. And it must be gratifying to the Christian reader to learn that such a locality was the subsequent birth-place of many souls. Among many others, Mr. Blest ascribes his conversion to God to his, at first casual, attendance at this place. He was then a gay, thoughtless young man, eagerly pursuing pleasure in the gratifications of sin. His own description of an event (often related by himself) that so influenced his future life, the author here inserts.

“One evening, as I was looking out of my window, labouring at the time under a strong temptation to sin, I saw some persons going to a prayer-meeting. Perhaps, said I, if I go with these people, I may be preserved from the power of Satan on this occasion. Anxious not to be involved in the contemplated transgression, I issued forth, went to the prayer-meeting, and heard Mr. Maiben, who always presided, pray; but I had no spiritual perception of what he said. The temptation, however, being removed, and concluding that Satan had no power over me, because I attended the prayer-meeting, I thought it would be well to go on the following evening. I did so, and imagined Satan’s influence considerably diminished. I began, after a little time, to get very religious and moral; and, no doubt, by many I would be esteemed as really pious, in consequence of my improvement in self-righteousness. But on a subsequent occasion all my hopes were blasted, and my self-complacency turned into the gloom of night. Mr. Maiben remarked, that if we lived all our lives as angels, and committed but one sin, all was gone. For if we were to be justified by our own righteousness, it must be a righteousness equal to the demands of the

divine law. This was a death-blow to all my improvements ; but, after a little, it pleased God to reveal to me his Son."

Such was his own expressive language. It is a faithful portraiture, and will be recognised as the experience of many who may read this memoir. He had felt the burden of sin, not merely as a transgression of the law of God, but as a degrading thralldom ; and he went about to establish his own righteousness by the deeds of the law. But when made acquainted by faith with that "righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe," he cast away human merit as the ground of his acceptance in the sight of God, and thankfully received the full and free salvation offered to guilty sinners, in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we have arrived at the most important period of Mr. Blest's life, let us pause for a few moments, and calmly consider the means which the Lord used, in order to make him a monument of his saving grace. While under the care of Mr. Cope, he had a wide field to indulge in every excess, and he thus graphically describes the state of public morals in the days of his youth.

"Every vice—every sin might be practised

with impunity. Ireland, at this time, was depraved, ignorant, and corrupt. Priest and people were alike. Immediately after the celebration of mass, as soon as the priest unrobed, the fiddler struck up a merry tune, and the dance commenced ; the parson went booted and spurred into the reading-desk ; the horses and hounds were within the churchyard enclosure ; the voice of the officiating minister, in pronouncing the benediction, was frequently interrupted by the sound of the huntsman's horn ; and away went all to the chase."

In the midst of such irreligion, he became so enslaved by sin that he declared conscience, at one time, was so aroused, that its language of protest was almost audible to him ; and, in reply to its faithful remonstrances, he gave utterance to his unsubdued feelings in the language of Scripture, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." No doubt he had previously met with that expression, but he did not recollect, at the time, that the pen of inspiration had traced it as a delineation of the natural man ; and when his attention was afterwards directed to a careful perusal of the word of God, he was surprised to find the exact words used in its sacred pages.

While in this hardened state of transgression, he had a severe illness, which it was thought would prove mortal. He was not altogether ignorant of the awful circumstances in which he was placed. He had sufficient information to perceive that he was totally unfit for the change he anticipated, yet such was his infatuation, he declared that he would have preferred entering the eternal world with all his sins upon his head, rather than be a debtor to divine grace for salvation.

But he had reached the turning point of his life. The still, small voice of the Gospel prevailed, even after the thunders of an accusing conscience had caused him to rise up in fierce opposition to his Maker. Weary of his sinful course, he was led, as already described, from some undefined notion of protection from temptation, to attend upon Mr. Maiben's prayer meeting, and what he witnessed there, at first excited his curiosity, and afterwards produced an abiding salutary effect, in a religious way, upon his mind. His subsequent change was very decided. There was no halting between two opinions. He had experienced the reception of the Gospel as the power and wisdom of God to the salvation of his soul, and he was early led

to glory even in the offence of the cross. To a mind naturally less firm than he possessed, much deliberation and hesitation of purpose would have preceded an open profession of the Gospel. But he had counted the cost, and was fully determined to abide the consequences. His former companions lamented over the defection of one who had been the leader of their musical and convivial parties, and endeavoured, by ridicule, to prevail upon him to retrace his steps. Their attempts, however, were fruitless. He candidly explained to them the principles on which he acted, and faithfully warned them to forsake their evil ways.

He adopted a practice, then almost unknown, of having family worship in his father's house. A Romish female servant was a regular attendant until she went to confession. The parish priest, the Rev. John Flynn, (afterwards titular bishop of Achonry,) was shocked at the intelligence she conveyed to him. Being an intimate acquaintance, he waited upon Mr. Blest, to warn him against becoming a fanatic. But he soon discerned his mistake, as he found this "wrong-headed young man" (as he designated him) quite capable of meeting him in argument, and he never repeated his visit. He

threatened, however, the servant with his displeasure, if she persisted in joining in prayer with such a "wild enthusiast." How lynx-eyed is popery, to prevent the introduction of religious light amidst the moral and intellectual darkness of its own creation ! View the Romish priesthood, even when Protestantism was devoid of vitality, watching with an unslumbering activity over one of its lowliest members. What a combined lesson of instruction and reproof does such an instance present to the careless ministers of a purer faith !

Some of his Protestant friends also became alarmed about his strange ideas on the subject of religion, and visited him, in order to persuade him into something like "common sense ;" but looking on his case as hopeless, they at length desisted.

None of these things moved him. There are dispositions of mind which divine grace does not obliterate, but sanctify, by its powerful agency. The mental impetuosity, which hurries the possessor of it into every excess of sinful riot, is often converted into a holy ardour in the service of God, which no opposition can quench. Mr. Blest felt that "much had been forgiven him," and he therefore "loved

much." He had been the slave of sin, and he now became the servant of holiness, and the willing instrument of promoting the knowledge of divine truth in his day and generation. His zeal did not result from the impulse of an excited imagination, but was the abiding effect of calm and deliberate consideration. He retired from much intercourse with the world for eighteen months, during which he uninterruptedly occupied himself in the study of the holy Scriptures, and he always attributed to that seclusion all his intimate and correct knowledge of the letter of the word of God. And to those who enjoyed the privilege of personal acquaintance with him, it is unnecessary to remind them of the clear insight he possessed of divine revelation, in its respective departments of doctrine and precept.

For a considerable length of time Mr. Maiben viewed Mr. Blest's attendance upon his prayer-meeting with much suspicion. He had been a notorious ringleader of dissipation, and had often exercised his satirical talents in ridiculing the despised party with which he then anxiously sought connexion. Mr. Blest's situation was a very painful one : conscience would not permit him to return to his former circle of associates,

and his sincerity was doubted by those with whom he wished to cultivate religious intercourse. The distressing position which he then occupied was, doubtless, permitted by infinite wisdom to prove the reality of his faith. If he had been unhesitatingly admitted into the unreserved friendship of the people of God, without undergoing such a severe ordeal, his range of experimental religion might have been much contracted; and he might not have been so well suited for that station of usefulness in which he was afterwards placed. Notwithstanding Mr. Maiben's caution, however, he did not treat him with neglect. He took advantage of a favourable opportunity of waiting upon him, to ascertain the real state of his mind on the subject of religion. He asked him if he had not been guilty of such and such sins: Mr. Blest candidly acknowledged that such had been the case. This open-hearted confession prepossessed Mr. Maiben in his favour, and the result of this interview was, that Mr. Blest became a constant visitor at Mr. M.'s house. His growth in divine grace combined two characteristics which rarely meet in the same individual, namely *rapidity* and *permanency*. The length of time which he almost exclusively occupied in the

prayerful perusal of God's word, made him thoroughly acquainted with its contents; and, with an intellect of a very high order, he took a mental grasp of the truths of revelation, which evidently showed that his belief of them was the result of a careful and deep investigation. Without the enjoyment of a Gospel ministry, he was led to the fountain of divine knowledge—the Bible, and under the guidance of God's Spirit, he there drank largely of the waters of salvation.

It is well worthy of remark, that in every religious revival, the promoters of it dwell much on the peculiar privileges of the people of God in their private thoughts, and public writings and addresses. The works of Romaine, and the class of men to whom we have already referred, afford abundant evidence of the truth of this observation. They are lights in the dark places of their respective localities; and from the very circumstance of their isolation, they entertain the idea of having discovered truths which others have never perceived. Such was the feeling of Mr. Blest's mind. In searching for the pearl of great price in the extensive field of revelation, he discovered many a concealed treasure which became the object of his careful preservation.

He stored them up, however, not for his own advantage, but for the benefit of his perishing fellow-mortals. It may be truly said of him, that he did not hide his talent in a napkin. Similarity of pursuit as to spiritual things brought him into close contact with Mr. Maiben, to whose house and table every sincere inquirer after truth had at all times a cordial and hospitable welcome. This intimate intercourse gradually ripened into feelings of mutual affection and esteem: and after some time Mr. Blest was married to Mr. Maiben's second daughter, on the 3d of May, 1780. Being thus closely connected with Mr. M.'s family, and a man of much penetration and sagacity, he became his confidential adviser in personal and religious matters. He co-operated with him in conducting his daily prayer-meeting; acting as his substitute in any unavoidable absence, and taking his place when age and infirmity caused him to withdraw from presiding over it himself.

To the present generation these proceedings may appear in the light of presumptuous zeal; but in forming a correct judgment, we should take into consideration the peculiar circumstances of that period to which we have already adverted.

What in ordinary cases could not be justified, necessity may not merely tolerate, but make an imperative duty. As now a matter of history, it will be satisfactory to the reader to be informed that the labours of love undertaken by Messrs. Maiben and Blest, with a single eye to the glory of God, were not in vain in the Lord. Many individuals who have died in the faith, have attributed their first serious impressions to these religious exercises; and some who still linger on the confines of time, look back with adoring gratitude to the Author of every good and perfect gift, who gave testimony to the word of his grace, through their instrumentality, in opening their minds to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. The spirit in which those prayer-meetings were conducted, was described by Mr. Blest in a conversation with the office-bearer of a dissenting congregation in Dublin. He had attended at their chapel, and observed some arrangements which he thought objectionable.

“The first person from whom I heard the Gospel, was a merchant in Sligo. He addressed his hearers from a reading-stand, just large enough to hold his Bible. He never ascended a pulpit. *There* he knelt in prayer, and *there* he read the Scriptures; and, without formally

selecting a text, he addressed the people in such a way as to produce a most wonderful effect. He altogether avoided all appearance of ministerial dignity. He acted with Christian humility, and his labours were eminently useful."

CHAPTER III.

GENERAL REMARKS—AN EXPOSE OF HIS RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS, ESPECIALLY ON THE SUBJECT OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT FROM HIS OWN CORRESPONDENCE—PROTESTANT PLACES OF WORSHIP THEN IN SLIGO—APPLICATION TO THE GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER, AND CAUSE OF ITS FAILURE—TO THE SECESSION SYNOD, AND APPOINTMENT OF A MINISTER—HIS WITHDRAWAL—TO LADY HUNTINGDON'S CONNEXION—LETTER OF LADY ANNE ERSKINE TO MR. BLEST—IMPORTANT LETTER OF MR. B. TO LADY ANNE ERSKINE—THE REV. CLAUDIUS MORRISON.

IN giving to the world a biographical sketch of an individual, the writer must endeavour not to confound his own view of matters with the sentiments of the person whose character he is portraying; but to act with the utmost impartiality in recording events in the spirit of that charity which "thinketh no evil," and thereby avoid imputing improper motives to those from whom he differs in opinion. We have now come to a point at which it will be necessary to keep this principle constantly in view. There is no desire on the author's part to give offence, but at the same time candour compels him to speak of

things as they occurred. These remarks are made in reference to the individuals whose names may be introduced into this memoir.

As Mr. Blest is now before us as a religious character, and will shortly appear as actively engaged in dissenting operations, it will be satisfactory to ascertain the nature and extent of his views with respect to church-government. Sec-tarianism, it may be safely alleged, formed no part of his creed in that respect. In dissenting from the Established Church, he did not re-nounce its principles ; but objected to what may be termed its then ecclesiastical administration. It must be acknowledged, that with him church-government was but a secondary object. As far as religious communities were concerned, his conduct fully and constantly proved that he wished to "know no man after the flesh." He stretched forth the right hand of Christian fellowship to any individual in whom he recognised the Saviour's image, irrespective of religious denomination ; and acknowledged such as a possessor of a common faith, and an expectant of a common glory. He disregarded the outward form of the casket, the moment he discovered the infinite value of its contents. This feeling of mind on his part will be viewed in an equally

unfavourable light by persons diametrically opposed in opinion on church-government ; but in developing Mr. Blest's character, a single lineament must not be omitted, that the representation of it may be as *vraisemblable* as possible.

A circumstance occurred at a comparatively late period of his life (1826), which will give the reader an insight of his real sentiments. It is given on the testimony of the Rev. Hugh S. Hamilton, then curate of St. John's, Sligo, and now vicar of Garvaghy, diocese of Dromore. In writing on the subject Mr. Hamilton says :—

“ Two able and active men (curates in the diocese of Elphin) were unfortunately seized with some unsteady notions respecting the church, and formed a determination to leave its ministry and communion. They had frequent conferences with Mr. Blest ; and I know it to be a fact (and surely it must be considered a strange one), that he, a dissenter at that time, actually defended the principles of the church against two of its clergy. It is also a fact that he entreated of them, as well as endeavoured to persuade them by arguments, not to take so rash a step ; and assured them that they would do more service to religion in the Established

Church, than in any other communion : adding that he himself did not withdraw from the worship of the church from any objection to its formularies or constitution ; but because that, in his day, the clergy were careless of their duties, and did not preach genuine doctrine. I remember Mr. Blest recounting to me one of these conversations, in which he defended the episcopal order as being countenanced by Scripture ; and said that they had been quite unable to answer him in the case of Titus, whom he asserted to have exercised the office of archbishop."

In corroboration of the sentiments contained in this statement, we have Mr. Blest's own testimony, in the following extract from a letter, written to Lieutenant J. E. Gordon, R.N., dated October 5th, 1826 :—

" You will acquit me of being influenced by any sectarian leaven in the opinion I give. By it I have never been influenced, and please God never shall ; nay, I oppose it from principle, and am at this present moment labouring with all my might to remove the scruples which would lead two young men from the line of usefulness—a parochial charge, in which they labour with some success."

It was also in connexion with the controversy which he had with these young clergymen, that the following observations are made, in a letter to the Rev. Charles Hamilton, rector of the Union of St. John's, Sligo, dated October 27th, 1826 :—

“Rev. Sir—I return the book with many thanks, and had only time to take a cursory glance of the canons which refer to the parochial duties of ministers ; and am of opinion no restriction is laid on their giving full proof of their ministry. The canon alleged as so interfering, does, I think, only forbid ministers holding private meetings to impugn the articles and liturgy of the church. This not being the object of *such* meetings, I think the canon leaves them at liberty to be instant in season, and out of season in private houses, as well as in churches.

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“I am quite delighted with the questions connected with the consecration of archbishops and bishops, leaving no alternative but full and cordial submission of the understanding to God's

word, as the perfect rule of faith, and ministerial services; or a fearful looking for of judgment."

In order to show that these sentiments were not then adopted by Mr. Blest, the following extract of letters on the same subject, written in the year 1816, to two beneficed clergymen, are inserted in this memoir :—

" January 18th, 1816.

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" You condescend, my dear sir, to request my prayers: poor as they are, they attend you. Without boasting I can say, that in this respect they are sincere, nor have I a doubt that the Lord will give an answer in peace, for it is agreeable to his will, and here we are sure to be heard, as it is for a blessing on that work, to effect which, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh. Nor is it less, my dear sir, a testimony of my affection that I now presume to add a word of caution. Have you counted the cost? Will your affectionate zeal to bring the glad tidings to the ears of sinners, in every place, affect your usefulness, or interfere with your situation in the Establishment. If I mistake not, being

instant in season and out of season, may be viewed as allowable, if within your own parish ; but how far a more extensive range may affect you in the eyes of the bishop, I know not. God forbid that I should damp your zeal, impede your usefulness, or induce you to temporize ; but I look on your situation in the Establishment as valuable, connected with the general interest of our Lord's kingdom, which is neither the Establishment, nor any, nor all, of the different bodies of the dissenters. Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother church, to which believers belong, and in whose communion we glory ; for when born from above we come to Mount Zion—the heavenly Jerusalem, &c. But the children of this free woman have been, are, and will be in the Establishment ; and convinced that our Lord has a rich harvest to reap there, I tremble at the idea that one of his dear labourers, called by himself to labour therein, should be instrumental in thrusting himself out. You will, I know, pardon the liberty I take, and I pray God you may be guided in a right way, and if any thing I have now hinted is a temptation to any deviation from it, that he will pardon me, and preserve you from the snare."

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" 1816.

" My Dear Sir—When I have a leisure hour, I find an indisposition to take up my pen, too strong for my sense of obligation or duty. However, though I have not written to you since, one hint your letter contained has frequently occurred to my mind, and made me uneasy; and even now I would have deferred writing to you to a more distant period, but that I wished to expostulate with you on the unsettled state your mind seemed to be in on the propriety of holding your situation in the Establishment. It would grieve me much indeed to see you leave it."

The former of these clergymen still lives, and the latter has long since entered into his heavenly rest. Both remained in the ministry of the Established Church, to which Mr. Blest's letters might have in a great measure contributed. If he had been actuated by sectarian feelings a favourable opportunity presented itself of enlisting them into the ranks of dissent. One more extract is given from a letter, written to the late Archbishop of Tuam, in January, 1824, as explanatory of the grounds of his dissent:—

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“It may be necessary to inform your Grace that what is called dissent in Sligo, as it applies to those of evangelical sentiments, originated, not in dissent from the *articles* and *liturgy* of the church, but from the *pulpit*, which, at that time, was in opposition to both. Happily a brighter day has dawned on the Established Church in this kingdom, in the revival of zeal for its apostolic doctrines, which will always prove the best preventive of dissent, and its charter of perpetuity.” . . .

Many similar extracts from Mr. Blest's correspondence might be adduced in confirmation of the view which has been given of the liberality of his religious principles, but what are now brought forward, are quite sufficient for that purpose. We now resume his biography.

There were at the period of Mr. Blest's early life but two places of Protestant worship in Sligo—the parish church of the union of St. John's; and a Presbyterian meeting-house, in connexion with the Synod of Ulster.

In the former the Gospel had not been faithfully preached since the death of the Rev. John Fontainier, a Huguenot minister, who, no doubt, had fled from France after the revocation

of the Edict of Nantz ; and subsequently conformed to the Established Church. He had preserved his integrity amidst persecution ; and when placed in more favourable circumstances, he failed not to preach those doctrines, for his sincere belief of which he was then an exile from his native land.

About the time of Mr. Blest's birth, John Wesley paid his first visit to Sligo, and collected a few followers. His preachers met with much opposition. The rector, the Rev. Eubel Ormsby, was a very amiable person, and felt unwilling to interfere with their proceedings. However, his curate had them arrested, and brought before a magistrate. Mr. Ormsby, upon hearing of this step being taken, proceeded to the office in which the parties were assembled, and addressing his curate, said, " Andrew ! Andrew ! let these men alone. Remember the advice of Gamaliel." This timely interposition prevented any further persecution, and produced an amicable feeling on the part of the Methodists towards the Established Church.

Since the death of a Rev. Mr. Ashe, the Presbyterian pulpit had been occupied by a minister of Socinian principles and immoral conduct. The plague spot of heterodoxy had

recently appeared in the Church of Scotland, and its contaminating influence had spread to its kindred community in Ireland. Under these circumstances of spiritual destitution, Messrs. Maiben and Blest considered it to be their duty to supply in the least objectionable way that lack of sound doctrine which the public ministrations of their respective churches then presented. Mr. Blest lectured for several years in the villages in the neighbourhood of Sligo, until the duty of providing for a numerous family, caused him to withdraw from such an occupation. In the meantime they applied to the Synod of Ulster. But it may be as well to permit Mr. Blest to speak for himself.

“ We had twenty-one probationers from the Presbyterian body, but not one of them was worthy of a call. Not that we were hard to please, but we wanted the Gospel. We would not feed on chaff or husks. We would regard a good man as an angel from heaven. The Presbyterian minister of Sligo at the time was a Socinian ; at all events, he was an ungodly man, and his congregation had no religion. We thought that by undertaking the entire expense of supplies, and having them from the Presbyterian connexion, the session in Sligo would

grant us the use of their meeting-house, and thereby enable us to introduce the Gospel to the congregation assembling in it. This they refused to do, and we were obliged to relinquish all idea of accommodation with them. There was, however, a Mr. Elder, of Finvoy, county of Antrim, an orthodox preacher with us; and I was deputed to proceed to the Letterkenny presbytery, with which he was connected, to get him on furthertrial: but I found he was engaged, and could not come.

“ We then applied to the Seceders, and got supplies from them. Among others Mr. John Gibson, who eventually was ordained our minister. But after a little time, when he got over his first stock of sermons, which were admirable, we found that not being a studious man, he was unable to keep up their number and value. We therefore felt it necessary to invite occasionally some popular preachers. Mr. Gibson took the alarm, and called a meeting of the congregation. The first question he proposed was, ‘ Were we satisfied with our minister?’ I replied, ‘ That was not the question; but were we satisfied that we had done all we could for the success of the Gospel in Sligo? That while we were not dissatisfied with our minister, should we stop

there? Should we not avail ourselves of assistance from other quarters, when practicable?" Mr. Gibson, however, left us no choice. He called for a division. A few of his personal friends clung to him, and with their co-operation, he commenced building a meeting-house. We also erected a decent and commodious place of worship. Mr. Gibson did not succeed, and left Sligo. Previous to his departure for Rich-hill, in the county of Armagh, he handed over to us his meeting-house in an unfinished state, which was let for private use, and according to a deed of trust executed by him, the profit-rent was appropriated to the support of our meeting-house."

In "The Irish Congregational Record" for May, 1834, we are informed that Mr. Gibson's removal from Sligo was occasioned by "unpleasantnesses," which "arose between him and his congregation: it is believed *on account of his itinerant services, the congregation wishing him only to preach, &c. within the precincts of his own charge;*" but we have in Mr. Blest's narrative the real cause of Mr. Gibson's departure from Sligo assigned. Such, however, were his reasons for withdrawing, at a subsequent period, from the secession synod.

The schism produced in the party with which Mr. Blest acted, separated the majority from Mr. Gibson's ministry, and dissolved their connexion with the religious body to which he belonged. The popular preachers, of whose pulpit ministrations Mr. Blest was so anxious to avail himself, were missionaries, occasionally sent to Ireland from the Countess of Huntingdon's theological academies in England; and from the year 1791, until the close of the last century, the meeting-house just then erected, was supplied by ministers of that denomination. Many of them were men of piety and talent, while the remaining number proved themselves in a great measure incompetent for the arduous office with which they were invested; and we cannot wonder at the latter being the case, when it was afterwards discovered that one of them had been a coachman. Men of this description might have been sincerely pious; but without any literary qualifications, except what a brief sojourn at an academy afforded them, it could not be expected that they would have been sufficiently prepared for their work. During this period Mr. Blest kept up a regular correspondence with Lady Anne Erskine, who was then acting as one of the trustees and principal

manager of the Countess of Huntingdon's connexion. One of her ladyship's letters yet extant will be read with much interest by all who have heard of her, and venerate her memory :—

“My Dear Sir—I embrace with pleasure the opportunity which Mr. Ballantine's return to Sligo affords me of addressing a few lines to assure you of my sincere regard, and I hope you will not construe my former silence as any proof of my want of it. I fully intended to have written to you the post after I last wrote to our good friend Mr. Richards, but illness prevented me. I refer you to Mr. Ballantine for particulars, and to Mr. Richards, to whom I have mentioned my hope (if the Lord wills it) to send a minister to Dublin in the spring, and to remove Mr. Bradley from thence to Sligo, who, I hope, will be made a blessing among you. The accounts I receive from Dublin of his conduct and labours are very encouraging and favourable. I did not expect Mr. Ballantine to have set off till the end of the week, and hoped, of course, to have more time to write at large, but I find it otherwise, and have hardly time to finish this before he sets out. May the

Lord make this new year very rich in blessings to you, and through your means to others ; as I hear you occasionally speak for him. May his word in your mouth be as fire among stubble, and as oil to comfort and refresh the souls of the Lord's people ; and may every dispensation of his providence, whether prosperous or adverse, be blessed, to bring you every day nearer and nearer to himself, and prepare you for the mansion above, which he has prepared for you. It is little likely we shall ever meet here, but when we meet in his kingdom, I trust we shall mutually rejoice with him and in him for ever.

“ I am, my dear Sir,

“ Your obliged friend and fellow-traveller,

“ A. A. ERSKINE.

“ Spa Fields, January 5th, 1797.”

The person who was the bearer of this letter had the privilege of frequent intercourse with her ladyship while he remained in London, and was much struck by the self-denial practised by her, in order that she might promote more extensively a cause so dear to her heart. During one visit, she pointed to her escritoir, and said—“ My dear friend, my faith is often tried ; I frequently have not a penny there to meet the

many demands upon me; but, somehow or other, in a few hours an unexpected contribution reaches me, and affords me ample means to carry on my work." However praiseworthy the design her ladyship and her noble predecessor had in view, it, generally speaking, failed, at least, as far as Ireland was concerned, from the injudicious selection of ministers which was made to supply their different preaching stations. One of them, a simple-minded person, when preaching on the *Fall of Man*, told his hearers that it was one of the excellent things to which he would call their attention. The late Rev. B. W. Mathias, who was present, could not refrain from smiling, and afterwards remarked to him that it was rather a deplorable event.

In December, 1800, Mr. Blest wrote a letter to Lady Anne Erskine, from which the following extracts are taken. The remaining parts are purposely suppressed, as relating to his confidential opinions respecting particular individuals.

"Madam—I trust I now address you from the best of motives—the glory of God; and, as it is far from my intention to offend or grieve

your ladyship, I hope you will not take amiss what I have to communicate. We have been supplied for some years with ministers from your connexion. I am sure you have acted from the purest motives, in taking so much trouble on our behalf; but I am sorry to be obliged to add that you have been either mistaken as to what would be suitable for this place, or not acquainted with the real abilities and ministerial character of those you have sent (one only excepted). Their total inadequacy for the situation they were sent to fill, has made the principal people of the congregation sick of the connexion; and they have come to a resolution to make application in some other quarter. I cannot say, as yet, whether it will be successful; but I thought it but honourable to mention the circumstance to your ladyship, and undisguisedly let you know the cause.

“In a letter with which you were so kind as to favour me, your ladyship observed, with much propriety, that God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, &c. &c. The purport of the remark was, that we might expect the divine blessing on weak means, as well as those apparently better calculated for the end, according to the judgment of men;

and to this I heartily agree. But I am sure your ladyship does not understand these expressions in a strictly spiritual sense; but in accommodation to the language and opinion of the world, in whose judgment the wisdom of God is folly, and the things of the Spirit foolishness. In accordance with this, a workman high in office and character in the church, was called a babbler; but all taught of God knew his discourses to be the wisdom of God and the power of God. The scriptural view of the passage can never justify persons who, with spiritual pretences, speak nonsense; and degrade their office by language that grieves the child of God to the heart, and affords room to the wicked for contempt and derision.

“I assure your ladyship it is with pain I write any thing that might hurt your feelings; but plainness of speech is absolutely necessary to show the disappointment of many who, for some years, have had no inducement to visit God’s house but a sense of duty. . . . Were we indifferent to the success of the Gospel among others, we cannot be indifferent to ourselves and our families, when we have men incapable of producing any thing solid and satisfactory, and with whose pulpit exhibitions

our very children are disgusted. . . .
 I trust we are still entitled to your attention, if we get not a supply from another quarter. Your motive for granting your preachers, was to spread a knowledge of the Gospel; our motive in requesting them was the same. . . .
 I take God to witness that I write not from unfounded prejudice. Ever since God so wonderfully called me by his grace, the success of his cause in Sligo has been my constant study, and I trust my delight.

“I have the honoured privilege to remain your ladyship’s affectionate servant, in our common Lord,

“ALBERT BLEST.”

In a long postscript to this letter he remarks :—

“Your ladyship cannot possibly know the abilities or real character of your preachers; you have not the opportunity of knowing them for a sufficient length of time to enable you to judge of the former, and your presence is a restraint that tends to disguise the latter. . .
 . . None but men of good natural sense, good information, good ministerial gifts, and real grace, are likely to be useful in Ireland.

The English seem to have a mistaken notion of this kingdom."

In conclusion, he adds:—

"I wrote this letter yesterday, and this day's post has brought me a reply from Mr. Haldane, (of Scotland,) mentioning that three young men had set off for Ireland—one for Armagh, one for Dublin—and one for Sligo, who, we expect, will arrive in two or three days. The three are to supply us every two months in rotation, which is the plan we have long wished for."

One of these individuals referred to was Mr. Claudius Morrison, who afterwards became the stated minister of the congregation. Mr. Gibson had, some time previous to Mr. Morrison's arrival in Sligo, gone to Rich Hill, in the county of Armagh. His departure removed all cause of dissensions, and the divided parties were re-united. But before we enter into the present century, some matters which were omitted in consecutive order, require our attention.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SLIGO BUCKS—THE IRISH REBELLION.

AN occurrence took place in the year 1792, shortly after the erection of the meeting-house built by Messrs. Maiben and Blest, sadly corroborative of the low state of morals, even in respectable society, in the town and neighbourhood of Sligo.

A club of dissipated young men, designated the Sligo Bucks, had been for some years in existence, and had caused much terror to the peaceable inhabitants by their riotous conduct and practical jokes, which were often productive of personal danger to the objects of them. In their nocturnal, drunken freaks, they frequently enclosed in coffins obnoxious persons; and, having marched in solemn procession through the principal streets, placed them on the battlements of the bridges, at the imminent peril of their lives. At other times, they amused themselves by breaking windows; and, on one occasion, they

had the hardihood to rescue from the county gaol an individual guilty of murder, as he happened to have been one of their associates. As immediately connected with Mr. Blest's personal history, their attempt to burn the meeting-house in the above-mentioned year, will be made the subject of more minute detail.

One night, at a very late hour, a respectable person providentially passed through the street in which it was built, and perceived a party of the Bucks engaged in watching the success of a plan which they had just adopted to burn it to the ground. A candle fixed to the window-shutter had already set fire to it. They immediately challenged him as to the object of his coming there, and one of them accompanied him to his own house to prevent any alarm being given. He, however, made no unnecessary delay in warning all who he knew were interested in the preservation of the building. Mr. Blest was the first person to reach the scene of those lawless doings. They had in the meantime forced an entrance through one of the windows, and caused bread and wine to be placed before them in impious mockery of the holy communion of the Lord's Supper; but only one of the ungodly party presumed so far

as to partake of them. After this revolting profanation of the most sacred ordinance of the Christian religion, they set fire to the house, injured the pews, and carried off the chandeliers. Upon Mr. Blest's arrival, he expostulated with them, and succeeded in extinguishing the flames. He had brought from home a case of pistols for self-preservation, and, when assaulted by several of them, he fired over their heads. This only served to increase their fury, and they made a simultaneous rush towards him. He then retreated, and, being a person of great muscular strength, maintained a single-handed conflict with them until he reached his own hall-door. By this time a number of the congregation, and men in his own employment, came to his assistance, and the disorderly rabble of the town having joined the Bucks, a general *rencontre* ensued. In the confusion an attempt was made to strangle Mr. Blest; but his friends and servants, arming themselves with every available weapon of defence within their reach, put the assailants to flight, but not until all the windows in front of his house had been broken by the mob. Thus ended the scene of the night.

On the following morning Mr. Blest and his party applied to the local magistrates for legal

redress ; but either from fear, or some less justifiable cause, their complaint was disregarded ; and the depositions of the Bucks were most unaccountably received, and were of so aggravated a nature, that recognizances would not be taken to any amount for Mr. Blest's appearance at the general assizes. To evade a long imprisonment he retired secretly to Dublin, and resided incognito with a relative until the eve of his trial ; he then surrendered himself to the legal authorities : and when the day arrived, he was placed in the dock as a common criminal ; the grand jury, from the nature of the evidence brought before them, having found true bills of indictment against him for felony, with an attempt to murder.

Conscious of his own innocence, he stood undismayed in such perilous circumstances. Prime-sergeant Fitzgerald acted as presiding judge, and showed his determination to uphold the dignity of the court by peremptorily ordering wine and other liquors, which had been openly brought into his presence by the prosecutors for their refreshment, to be instantly removed. The trial at length commenced, and witnesses were easily procured to substantiate on oath all the false accusations preferred against

him. After an apparently strong case had been made out, one of the Bucks, to prove their moderation, came forward, and offered to drop the prosecution, if an humble apology were made by Mr. Blest. They foresaw that the false testimony, which had been given on their side of the question, would be completely overturned by the witnesses on the part of the defence. In order to ensure conviction, they had included, in their legal informations, every individual who came forward to protect the meeting-house, except the person who had unexpectedly witnessed their first attempt at arson, and was a spectator of all that subsequently occurred after Mr. Blest's arrival: they endeavoured by threats and promises to prevent his appearance in court; but, nothing daunted, he gave his testimony, and was the principal means of frustrating their diabolical designs. The judge, a humane and upright man, placed the evidence and motives of the prosecutors in a proper light, and a verdict of honourable acquittal was recorded.

When the trial was over, Mr. Blest at once acceded to a proposal of mutual reconciliation, and shook hands with those who had so lately thirsted for his blood. He also put a stop to

legal proceedings, which had been taken by his friends to bring the entire matter before the Court of King's Bench; he desired not revenge: all his anxiety was to establish his own innocence; and when that point was gained, he lost sight of every other consideration.

It is a remarkable fact that, with one or two exceptions, all engaged in this awful outrage, either met with untimely deaths, or their profligate lives afforded no well-grounded hope of their latter end; but it is considered more consistent with Christian feelings not to enter into any detailed account, which a document in the author's possession would enable him to give. Suffice it to say, that such a disreputable affair was a death-blow to the lawless combination.

After a lapse of more than thirty years Mr. Blest had the happiness of witnessing the death-bed scene of one of the ringleaders. The retrospect of his past sinful life occasioned deep anguish of soul, and for a season eternity was shrouded with the fearful gloom of uncertainty; but at length he was enabled, by faith, to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Gospel. He sunk in self-abasement of mind at the foot of Emanuel's cross, and in the language of reconciliation with

God, he uttered, in the outgoings of his departing spirit, "Abba, Father!"

The principal chandelier stolen from the meeting-house, was placed in their club-room, in Tyreragh, a neighbouring baronial district; and it is an interesting reflection that Mr. Blest was, some years afterwards, invited to address a crowded auditory, in that very apartment, on the things connected with their eternal peace.

Whilst reviewing such a painfully distressing scene of lawless conduct, together with the infamous means resorted to for Mr. Blest's conviction for an alleged capital offence, and the results which followed, that expression of the inspired psalmist of Israel is forcibly presented to the mind—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

During the eventful period of the Irish rebellion, in the year 1798, many fruitless attempts were made by influential persons connected with the disaffected party, to induce Mr. Blest to unite himself with it. But he withstood every argument brought forward for that purpose. Exclusive of the disloyalty of their proceedings, he pointed out to them the futility of their plans; and whenever he encountered a

Protestant infected with revolutionary principles, he reasoned with him as to the impolicy of his conduct, and the melancholy consequences which would inevitably follow the realization of his treasonable expectations.

On one occasion, a personal friend who was a member of a secret political committee, assured him that his great anxiety to have his name enrolled in the rebel association, arose from the purest motives of personal regard ; that such a step was necessary for his own safety ; and that the contemplated change of government would be for the benefit of all religious denominations in Ireland. After patiently listening to all his statements, Mr. Blest inquired, " Could such a change be effected without shedding of blood ? " The other replied, " When we have all Ireland enrolled, then the change will be made in a moment, and so simultaneously, as to render any attempt at resistance quite impossible ; and thus the shedding of blood will be avoided. " " Can your system bear the light ? " asked Mr. B. " No, " replied his friend, " it must be kept secret at present. " " Oh, then, " said Mr. B. " I will have nothing to do with it, for as it cannot bear the light, it must proceed from evil. ' For every one that doeth evil hateth the light,

neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.'” From this interview, all hopes of securing him to their interests, were abandoned.

In the autumn of that year, the French Republic sent supplies of men and ammunition to the aid of the Irish rebels ; and a landing was effected under the command of the French General Humbert, at Killala, a seaport town in the county of Mayo, on the western coast of Ireland. In their progress into the interior of the country, this foreign army was encountered by all the available force which the English government had in that locality, about five miles southward of the town of Sligo, adjacent to the village of Collooney. A regular engagement ensued, and victory for some hours remained doubtful. In the opinion of many eye-witnesses standing on the adjacent hills, it did not at length terminate in favour of either party. The hand, however, of an overruling Providence was clearly manifested in the result. The French army far outnumbered the opposing force ; but having ulterior objects in view, Humbert moved onward in another direction, instead of advancing towards Sligo, which being almost undefended, would have proved an easy prey.

While the event of the engagement remained

doubtful, nothing could equal the consternation of the inhabitants of Sligo. Sir Richard Musgrave, in his "History of the Rebellion," gives the following description of matters there, which is fully borne out by what then actually took place.

"About three o'clock, P.M., some disaffected people entered Sligo, and announced that our army had been beaten, and that the French were advancing; on which many Protestant women and some men, who could not bear arms, embarked in the ships, fearing more the popish inhabitants than the French, but those who were capable of doing so, to the number of three hundred, marched round the town in arms, and resolved to die in its defence. They were joined by a number of Methodists, singing hymns, who were headed by their preacher, Albert Blest, a man of great piety, and noted for humanity and charity."

The appellation here given of Methodists is in accordance with the phraseology long in use, which designated pious persons by such distinctive names; and the description of Mr. Blest as "a preacher," must have arisen from his having so long conducted the prayer-meetings already alluded to.

To any one acquainted with the local situation of Sligo, in a valley between two hills, the patriotic band of volunteer defenders would, humanly speaking, have been quite insufficient to preserve it from capture and pillage. A temporary battery had been erected on a fort to the north of the town ; but, in the opinion of experienced individuals, it would not have afforded any effectual opposition to an invading army. Divine Providence evidently frustrated the ambitious projects of the French republic, to reduce Ireland, through the instrumentality of a portion of its infatuated inhabitants, to the degraded position of a tributary state. General Humbert, ignorant of the language and localities of the country, became both disgusted and disheartened when he saw the miserable class of persons that flocked to his revolutionary standard, during his inland progress ; and upon the first favourable opportunity surrendered at Ballinamuck. His capitulation sealed the fate of sedition against British authority in Ireland, and crushed the hopes of the malcontents.

CHAPTER V.

MISSIONARY EXERTIONS TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—GENERAL EVANGELICAL SOCIETY OF DUBLIN—EVANGELICAL SOCIETY OF ULSTER—LIST OF EVANGELICAL CLERGYMEN IN IRELAND IN THE YEAR 1797—NOTICES OF THE REV. HENRY MATURIN AND REV. J. WALKER, FELLOWS T.C.D., ETC. ETC. ETC.

ONE of the most distinguishing characteristics of the Reformation of the United Church of England and Ireland was, that the good work was commenced and carried on by her ecclesiastical rulers. In other Protestant countries, the purification of their respective national sanctuaries had to be effected by the subordinate clergy, assisted by the laity, in opposition to the ruling powers in church and state. And thus a recurrence to first principles was attained, not unfrequently, in the midst of civil disorder and bloodshed; and their reformers were not permitted to remodel their respective churches according to the convictions of their mind, but the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed. From the happier lot enjoyed by our Zion, her highly

favoured hierarchy proceeded to the desired consummation of their wishes in "the decency and order" so necessary to such an important undertaking. Whilst they rescued her from papal thralldom, her primitive and apostolic ministry was not revolutionized, but reformed; and her liturgy and offices were not abolished, but purified from superstitious error. It is the high privilege of her members to be thankful for these peculiar blessings vouchsafed to her, but they should bear in constant recollection, that, *as a church*, she does not presume to call in question the arrangements adopted, whether from choice or necessity, by other sections of Protestant Christendom. She prudently attended to her own vineyard, and never, unless when made the tool of political power, unnecessarily interfered with the internal concerns of other national churches.*

* Allusion is here made to the struggles, during the seventeenth century, of the House of Stuart, to revive episcopacy in Scotland: but did not the Presbyterians of that country act a similar part, when they made the introduction of their form of church government, a *sine qua non* of their compact with the parliament of that day; and were not Cromwell's faction guilty of worse conduct, when it brought that unfortunate monarch to the scaffold?

Disunion within her pale, whether arising from conscientious scruples or unprincipled opposition, soon sprung up as tares within her sacred enclosure ; and mutual alienation of feeling marred that unity of sentiment which marked the early progress of her reformation. Unfriendly motives were attributed by each party ; and the seeds of religious discord, then sown, have, for nearly three centuries, vegetated with undying fertility in our land.

In the reign of the sixth Edward, her bishops and dignitaries acted as evangelists, by proclaiming in a missionary character, the Gospel of the grace of God, throughout the length and breadth of England. Abundant success crowned their labours, and the scriptural truths of Protestantism became the national faith. The distracted state of Ireland, at that period, did not permit a similar plan of operation to be adopted ; and its inhabitants were permitted to remain in a state of ignorance. During the former portion of the seventeenth century, when Ussher and Bedell adorned the episcopacy of the Irish church, they resorted to every possible means to benefit the native population ; but they were not permitted to reap the fruits of their godly exertions. Cromwell's sword of extermination

superseded the spiritual weapon which they so effectively wielded ; and political ascendancy, and not scriptural emancipation from a false religion, subsequently became the order of the day. Missionary preaching became identified with dissent, and thus the reformed church of Christ in these lands relinquished one of her most powerful instruments of extension into the hands of others. If the native Irish could be kept in a state of civil subordination to the English dynasty, no more was practically desired by many successive governments. For almost a century after the revolution, the dominant party in the state were busily engaged in enacting penal laws against the professors of popery ; and the weaker party, endeavouring to alleviate the degraded political condition in which they were placed. But both forgot the religious destitution of the country ; and the church was crippled in her occasional and desultory efforts.

Christian sympathy was, however, strongly excited in the minds of pious individuals, both lay and clerical, from time to time, when they witnessed, and bewailed the irreligious desolation which abounded around them. Individual exertions were altogether inadequate to meet the emergency of the case ; and towards the

close of the last century a combined effort was made on a general plan, *irrespective of church government*, to send preachers of the Gospel throughout Ireland.

This movement originated in a conversation which took place between Mr. Blest, and a Rev. Mr. Colman, an Englishman, then on a visit at his house, in Sligo, who, if the author's information be correct, officiated at the first opening of the former Bethesda Chapel in Dublin, and afterwards proceeded to the west of Ireland as a missionary preacher. Upon Mr. Colman's return to Dublin, the proposed mode of operation met with immediate adoption by influential persons there. Two kindred societies, under the denominations of the General Evangelical Society of Dublin, and the Evangelical Society of Ulster, started into existence, under the direction of the Rev. John Walker, F.T.C.D.; and the Rev. Benjamin M'Dowall, D.D., then minister of the Presbyterian congregation, assembling in Mary's-abbey meeting-house, Dublin.

The evangelical clergy of the church of Ireland were not very numerous in that day. Among Mr. Blest's manuscripts is a list of the principal names, furnished to him by Mr. John-

ston, bookseller, Dublin, in the year 1797.
The following copy is published, as it may be
interesting to the reader :—

Rev. Messrs. Maturin, then F.T.C.D.

Nash, near Dingle, county of Kerry,
Wakeman, Middleton, county of Cork,
Sheppard, Limerick,
Blood, near Gort, Clare,
Walker, Silvermines,
Fulton, Silvermines,
Price, Queen's County,
Martin, Dublin,
Walker, F.T.C.D.,
Kelly, Blackrock,
Mitchel, Blackrock,
Graves, Drogheda,
Pidgeon, Kilkenny,
Tighe, county Down,
Nicholson, New Ross, county of Wexford,
Matthias, county Down,
Thompson, Dean,
Leard, county of Cork,
Caulfield, Killyman,
Higginson, county of Antrim,
Hawthornthwaite, Mountrath,
Maunsell, Drumcree, county of Armagh,
Averell, Tentore, Queen's County,
Grace, Archdeacon,
Lowe,
Harding, Dundrum,
Druitt, Dublin,
Shirley, Loughrea, county of Galway.

In allusion to the last person in this list, the
Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley, Mr. Blest

speaks in the following terms, in a letter which he wrote to the Rev. John Burke, the curate of that parish, now rector of Kilcolgan, diocese of Kilmacduagh :—

“ 1816.

“ I remember when the Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley occupied your pulpit; but his light had scarcely struggled with darkness when it was removed, and from all I have heard, no ray beamed on that county until the head of the church gave the Rev. James Daly to Galway, and you to Loughrea. May you both be long spared and blessed in your work. Mercy shall be built up for ever! How encouraging the immutable decree of Jehovah! This has continued the glad tidings, and secured success; and in our day we witness the decree bringing forth in a remarkable advance of the building of mercy in Ireland. When Mr. Shirley was in Loughrea, I know not whether another individual minister of the Establishment preached the Gospel in its purity. Now the blessed increase may well give birth to the exclamation—“ Who hath begotten me these !” *

* Among Mr. Blest's manuscripts is the following biographical notice of Mr. Shirley :—

“ The Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley, son of Earl Ferrers,

With respect to the subsequent revival of religion in the Established Church, Mr. Blest, in a letter to the Venerable Archdeacon Ussher, written about the same time as the preceding communication, makes the following observations :—

“ I have had great satisfaction in perusing your printed address to your parishioners. May He who can alone give testimony to the word of his grace, bless it abundantly to them ; and give you many, very many of them, as your crown of rejoicing, when the great Shepherd appears. What a mercy, my dear sir, that I am spared to

was an Englishman, who, from his high political connexions, entertained sanguine expectations of preferment in the church. He was at the time he entered the ministry altogether destitute of the knowledge of true religion. He kept a pack of hounds, and was the promoter of every amusement in the town of Loughrea, which rendered him a general favourite with the inhabitants, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant. It was with him nothing uncommon to enter the pulpit booted and spurred, the hounds kept in waiting at the outlets of the town, and all proceeded to the hunt after divine service. During a visit to his native country, he waited upon the justly celebrated Countess of Huntingdon, at whose residence he met with the Rev. Mr. Venn, author of the ‘ Complete Duty of Man.’ His conversation with Lady Huntingdon and her chaplain, produced a very material change in his religious views and principles. On his return to Loughrea he sold his superfluous horses, disposed of his pack of hounds, and discharged his unnecessary servants ; and instead of leading the

see this day, which exhibits such a glorious contrast to what I witnessed nearly forty years ago. Then, after every inquiry, I could not hear of any ministers in the Establishment in this kingdom, but one or two, who knew the joyful sound. Now, thanks be to God ! they abound ; and may there still be a blessed increase !”

The period to which Mr. Blest here refers, must have been still more remote, than when the foregoing list was furnished to him. The author feels justified in remarking that, however unknown to him, the Lord never permitted his

dissipations of the town as heretofore, he commenced a regular visitation of his parishioners, preaching the Gospel as he went from house to house. This change appeared so extraordinary that they could not account for it in any other way than attributing it to insanity, which some affirmed was hereditary in his family. His curate, a man who made no profession of religion, considered it his duty to acquaint his bishop that his rector was preaching heresy. The bishop sent for Mr. Shirley, and acquainted him with the nature of the charge preferred against him. A day was appointed for the investigation, when both rector and curate appeared face to face before his lordship. Mr. Shirley requested the bishop to ask his accuser, ‘ What is heresy ? ’ After much hesitation the curate answered, that ‘ heresy was heresy.’ Upon which the bishop reproved him very sharply ; and directed him to return home, and study his principles more correctly than it appeared he had hitherto done. Mr. Shirley retired to England on the outbreak of the last rebellion.”

church to be so destitute of faithful pastors as he was led to think. In the darkest days of Israel's declension and idolatry, inspiration informs us that there were seven thousand souls who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and if such were the case in a comparatively dark dispensation, surely, in a church, presenting to its ministry and members the unfettered perusal of the revealed will of God, and a scriptural liturgy as its form of worship, it is not presumption to assert, that God left not himself without many witnesses in the ranks, both of clergy and laity, though from the unhappy circumstances of the times their light was, in a great measure, hidden under a bushel.

The operations of these missionary societies did not meet with the sanction and support of the episcopal order, and unfriendly collision was the inevitable consequence. The bishops, as administrators of the canon law, felt themselves called upon to enforce a strict observance of those ecclesiastical regulations, which forbid the intrusion of one clergyman into the parish of another; and an additional objection arose from the employment of preachers, in no way connected with the church, in accordance with the general principles of those two missionary institutions.

It is a matter which involves subjects of important consideration, as to the particular point at which one clergyman is justified in interfering in the ministerial labours of another. But whatever ecclesiastical provision should be made by competent authority in such extreme cases, it is evident, from the nature and duties of the pastoral office, that each parochial minister ought to be a burning and a shining light in the locality of his labours ; while it is his blessed privilege to be earnest at a throne of grace, that the Lord of the harvest would increase the number of those spiritual workmen, who need not be ashamed—their ministrations proving that they rightly divide the word of life. Bishops may have erred in pursuing what they considered a conscientious line of duty ; but have the inferior clergy been altogether faultless in the course they have adopted ? They may have acted from the purest motives ; but discretion and prudence are also necessary, that their good be not evil spoken of. Such a thing as episcopal misapprehension may exist, arising from a partial and imperfect view of matters ; and it is by a patient continuance in well-doing, through good and evil report, that a faithful minister of the Gospel is enabled to overcome every opposing prejudice. When a church

is confessedly scriptural in her constitution and doctrines, violent opposition to her constituted authorities is never productive of beneficial results. It engenders feelings inimical to Christian humility ; and generally terminates in separation from a communion in which the individual has been born unto God, and in which his ministry has been blessed to the salvation of many souls. The unfavourable circumstances which at the moment appeared to justify a person thus situated in becoming a dissenter, are in the sequel found to be but of a temporary nature, and by no means inseparably connected with a system of church government, which becomes the object of abhorrence. Every divine institution, carried on by human agency, is liable to imperfection and abuse ; but that is no apology for those who may anxiously desire its extinction. The drawing of the sword of ecclesiastical insubordination should be carefully avoided, as it is often found impracticable to replace it in its scabbard ; and in the unsanctified warfare which ensues, pure and undefiled religion is often sacrificed before the shrine of unholy discord.

It has, however, been deeply regretted by the firmest friends of the church, that advantage has not been taken by her prelates of the labours of

individuals in the ministry, of a missionary spirit, who would gladly carry on their operations under their episcopal guidance and control. The deeply-lamented last Archbishop of Tuam had a judiciously-organized diocesan mission, worked by his Grace's junior clergy, who, in rotation, and under his archiepiscopal direction and sanction, preached in the churches and schoolhouses of the united dioceses of Tuam, Ardagh, Killala, and Achonry; and their labours were productive of much good, both among the Protestant and Romish population. The tears of that "repentance which needeth not to be repented of," were often seen to flow from the eyes of an aged and careless Protestant, who had been long estranged from the house and worship of God; and the Romanist was excited to search in the book of God's revelation for the unsearchable riches of Christ, the value of which was brought before his mind by those missionaries. These observations have been elicited in taking a retrospect of the period under review.

In the list of evangelical clergymen which has been given, are the Rev. Henry Maturin, and the Rev. John Walker, Fellows of Trinity College, Dublin; and the Rev. Thomas Kelly. The then Archbishop of Dublin objected to the

doctrines which they preached, and the irregularity of their proceedings. In consequence of which, his Grace issued a monition to his clergy, which excluded them from all the churches in the diocese of Dublin ; and their public ministry was confined to Bethesda chapel.

Mr. Maturin shortly afterwards retired on the college living of Clondevaddock, in the diocese of Raphoe, then vacant by the murder of the Reverend Doctor Hamilton. An aged parishioner remarked, that the new rector must have been either a devil, or a saint, to venture into such a lawless district. His first public act, upon taking possession of his parish, proved the disinterestedness of his principles in the regulation of his future income ; and he lived long, beloved and respected by all denominations of his parishioners. At length, having reached the seventy-first year of his age, and the forty-third of his pastoral connexion with the diocese of Raphoe, he expired at four o'clock on the morning of January 3d, 1842. Few individuals possessed a more clear insight and experimental knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel ; and his childlike simplicity, and deep humility of mind, combined with a discriminating perception of intellect seldom surpassed, render his Christian character

an object, well worthy of imitation by his survivors in the ministry. His chastened expression of countenance showed him, at one glance, to be a person under the sanctifying influence of real religion. The perfect ease and fluency with which he preached and lectured, and also conducted his family worship, proved that he spoke from the abundance of his heart, of those great things which God had done for his own soul. Even an occasional visitor could not fail to recognise his host as truly a "man of God." No subject of conversation, whether scientific, literary, or scriptural, could be introduced upon which he was not capable of speaking with an accuracy, and extent of information, which both astonished and delighted the listener. But he never for a moment lost sight of his high and holy office, as an "ambassador for Christ;" and a transition to the most serious subjects of human consideration, could be abruptly made by the company that surrounded him, without the slightest effort to tranquillize their minds already solemnized by his sanctified presence. He was providentially removed to an active sphere of ministerial usefulness, and thereby escaped the vortex of sectarianism, which so soon afterwards engulfed his old friend, Mr. Walker; and he survived to see

the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith become the prevailing sentiment of his brethren in the ministry. It is said that, at a late period of his life, he respectfully declined the archdeaconry of the diocese, upon the death of his revered friend and college contemporary, the Rev. John Ussher, D.D.

It is almost unnecessary to remark, that Mr. Walker was deprived of his fellowship in October, 1804, by the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; and in the subsequent week voluntarily withdrew from connexion with all the religious societies which he had either originated or promoted by his influence. He had been early brought to a knowledge of divine truth, and earnestly and incessantly laboured for many years to promote the cause of vital godliness; but the period of his exertions was not congenial for such an arduous undertaking. Whether the exclusive views which he afterwards adopted, were the result of the opposition which he encountered, it is now immaterial to discuss. One thing, however, is certain—a change passed over his spirit; he who had been Christian-minded, affectionate, and forbearing, presented a repulsive aspect towards all who had been so long associated with him, but did not follow him to

the lengths to which he advanced. Towards the close of that year he published an explanatory statement of his conduct, in the form of an appendix to a sermon declaratory of his religious opinions. The pamphlet evinces much sophistry of argument in self-justification; but his painful position at that time must have caused him to view many subjects through a very distorted medium. At his ordination, he expressed his unfeigned belief that he had been truly called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the order of the united Church of England and Ireland, to the order and ministry of priesthood; and now he proclaims to the world—"From the time I received ordination in the Establishment, I considered myself not as invested with any kind of *divine* authority, or rank, above any other Christian, but merely authorized by the state to exercise certain religious acts, according to certain forms prescribed by the laws of the country." At his ordination he solemnly promised, the Lord being his helper, reverently to obey his ordinary, and other chief ministers, unto whom should be committed the charge and government of him. He certainly could not have seriously considered the full import of canonical obedience, when he now

declares—"I knew too well the character of those by whom I was thus *recognised* as a Christian teacher, to plume myself upon their sanction of me; and from the same knowledge of them, their principles, and their views, I had no other expectation, but that I would, sooner or later, be removed from the situation which I held, for the faithful discharge of Christian duty." At his ordination he also solemnly promised, the Lord being his helper, to give his faithful diligence always so to minister the doctrines, and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this church and realm hath received the same, according to the commandment of God, so that he might teach the people committed to his cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same. And now he asserts, that, "as far as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is concerned, the whole ceremony of what is called *consecration* and *administration*, on the part of the priest, is merely a human form, and no real part of Christ's institution; that he, therefore, conceived there was really no more done than each coming to the table, took the bread and wine for himself; and that to debar any from this he con-

sidered as useless, as to prevent their repeating the Lord's prayer with him." And with the rubrics at the commencement of the communion service before him, he tells his readers that the church sanctions the indiscriminate admission to a participation of the Lord's Supper; overlooking altogether the authority given to a clergyman to warn, nay even forbid, the profane person coming forward to the holy communion.

Even on the supposition that the church was in error, and Mr. Walker's views were scriptural, it must be acknowledged that his position, as her ministering servant, was very anomalous, when his real sentiments, and his voluntarily undertaken engagements, were so much at variance. He considered that the sphere of usefulness which his situation afforded him, justified his continuance in the ministry; but how could he expect the blessing of God to rest upon his labours under such circumstances? The author presumes not to sit in judgment upon his conduct—but he thinks his example affords a suitable warning to all candidates for the ministry to be fully persuaded in their own minds before they enter upon the solemn service of the sanctuary. If they heedlessly rush into the ministry, without being fully persuaded in

their own minds as to the scriptural claims of the church, their thoughts, instead of being wholly given up to the ministry, will be unprofitably occupied in devising casuistical arguments to satisfy their scruples. Nothing is more detrimental to growth in grace, than having the mind poised in *equilibrio* between conflicting opinions. The same arguments, viewed in different aspects, will cause either scale alternately to preponderate. It is the duty and privilege of the Christian to pray for a "right understanding in all things," and a firm resolution to pursue that course of conduct which the revealed will of God dictates. Man, in his present state of imperfection, is to a certain extent the creature of circumstances; and much caution is necessary to avoid prejudice, arising from personal or relative causes. Even good men, from constitutional texture of mind, may possess peculiarities which render official intercourse with them, to say the least of it, unpleasant; but in such cases they are not warranted in attributing the treatment they may in consequence receive, to the offence of the cross.

The Rev. Thomas Kelly, much about the same time, also withdrew from the Established Church; but with very different feelings towards

his former friends to what poor Mr. Walker entertained. The author wishing to act with candour, gives the grounds for his dissent in Mr. Kelly's own language, extracted from his answer to "Burgh's Dissent from the Church of England unwarrantable:"—

"When, about thirty years ago, I became convinced that a national system of religion, whatever truth might be embodied in its confession and its ritual, could not, *as a system*, be so modified as to bring into operation the principles of the New Testament, I felt that I must either leave it, or be identified with what my judgment disapproved of, and my conscience condemned. In adopting the first part of the alternative, I do not ask credit for much self-denial; but, on the other hand, I disclaim the imputation of sectarian policy. If I had the ambition, I have not the abilities required for the head of a party, yet I acknowledge that the steps which I took admitted of such a construction. There were independent churches in existence, with which I might have connected myself—churches holding the truth of the Gospel, and acting in their associate capacity on principles which, generally speaking, appeared to me to be correct. Why, then, did I not

join them ? Simply because I thought they did not follow up their principles to their legitimate consequences."

Now, much blame has been cast upon the then Archbishop of Dublin, and the Provost of Trinity College, for their conduct during this period. Their motives are not a proper subject of discussion. Such are only known to the Searcher of hearts, before whose judgment-seat they have been long since scrutinized ; and whether they were actuated by a spirit of opposition to the doctrines of the Gospel, the great day of solemn account will alone disclose. They were placed in situations of responsibility ; being, in their respective offices, the appointed guardians of the interests of the Established Church. Let us for a moment suppose the case of a minister of a dissenting congregation, talented and laborious, adopting principles, and a line of procedure, totally at variance with the sentiments of the body to which he has hitherto belonged ; and would his piety and exertions be viewed as a sufficient excuse for overlooking his irregularities ? By no means—expulsion from communion would be the inevitable consequence. Let the same measure of justice be allotted to the bishops of the Church of England ; and much of

the obloquy which is occasionally cast upon them, will be viewed as proceeding from a partial consideration of the matter. Bishops cannot be blamed for exercising a strict *surveillance* over persons acting in direct violation of the canons of the church. Whether these canons be scriptural or not, is another question. They have promised to regulate their ministrations in strict conformity to them, and also to yield a conscientious obedience to episcopal authority. The church neither compels any to enter unwillingly into her ministry, nor does she follow with anathemas those who retire from it. In both cases it is a perfectly voluntary act. When peculiar principles are imbibed, which prevent the faithful and sincere fulfilment of ministerial vows and duties, a remedy is at hand without placing those in authority in the painful position of vindicating the laws of the church. It may, however, so happen, that a diocesan may form an incorrect opinion of the true nature of doctrinal sentiments and ministerial proceedings; but a satisfactory development of both will sooner or later take place, if the spiritual good of the church be a mutual object. Of the truth of this observation, we have many striking

examples, even in dignitaries of the present day.

It was the General Evangelical Society of Dublin which first introduced the Rev. William Cooper, the well-known minister of Plunket-street Meeting-house, into the metropolis of Ireland. He has the high honour of having been among the first, if not the very first minister of any denomination, who attacked the strong-holds of Popery in controversial sermons. When a paralytic attack, some years ago, terminated, in a great measure, his public life, the author has been informed by a personal friend of Mr. Cooper, that the late Archbishop of Dublin (Doctor Magee) took a favourable opportunity of communicating to his clergy, that he felt Mr. Cooper had been long doing their duty, and that it then necessarily devolved upon them to attend to the comforts of his declining years. A deputation waited upon Mr. Cooper to consult him on the subject, and communicate to him the motives which influenced his Grace in the matter. Mr. Cooper expressed himself as grateful for the Archbishop's consideration, but that he felt it was his own Master's work in which he had been engaged. Upon which his

Grace became a subscriber to a more general fund.

In the early existence of this missionary society, the Rev J. Walker travelled as one of its agents, to secure for it protection and support in influential quarters. He visited Sligo either two or three times. At first he was permitted to preach in the parish church, and his sermons were very acceptable to the congregation; but on the last occasion he was excluded from it, and preached elsewhere. He remained at Mr. Maiben's house, having been the college tutor of his youngest surviving son. The Rev. Rowland Hill took Sligo, *en route*, in his travels through Ireland, and preached in the county court-house to crowded assemblages.

The General Evangelical Society of Dublin, and the Ulster Evangelical Society, incurred as much opposition from the different sections of the Presbyterian body as they did from the heads of the Established Church; and thus failed in the accomplishment of their common object. In the then and present disunited state of the Christian world, any general scheme of usefulness is not likely to be promoted by an universally cordial plan of co-operation. Each party has its own line of demarcation, the

slightest infringement of which is viewed with feelings of suspicion. It is only in that blessed period of the universal church, when its members "shall see eye to eye, and face to face," that we can look forward to the total absence of jealousy and distrust. We cannot fully fathom the divine purpose in permitting the divisions which exist among those who name the name of Christ; but while such is the order of things, let us not (to adopt the language of Scripture) "bite and devour one another." Affectionate forbearance and undisssembled love should characterize the intercourse of professing Christians.

Having introduced to the notice of the reader matters to which it will be necessary to make incidental allusions in subsequent parts of this memoir, the author now resumes the narrative more immediately connected with Mr. Blest's personal history.

It has been already seen that the religious exertions in Sligo, as far as Messrs. Maiben and Blest were concerned, were at first attempted to be carried on in connexion with the Synod of Ulster. But when that negotiation failed, recourse was had to the Secession Synod, under the auspices of which they progressed for some

years, and that afterwards they were continued under the patronage of Lady Anne Erskine. Mr. Blest's own account will explain the reasons which, in his estimation, justified the desultory nature of these proceedings.

“ We had occasionally Seceding Ministers in Sligo, but *as Seceders* we knew nothing of them. We merely recognised them as preachers of the Gospel. The Gospel was our principle in all things. We afterwards got ministers from England : and the Rev. Mr. Coleman, then on a visit at my house, and with whom, at that time in conversation with me, the idea of the Evangelical Society first originated, pointed out to us the necessity of getting popular experimental ministers to Sligo ; among the first of whom was the Rev. Doctor M'Dowall, of Mary's Abbey, Dublin, and he preached for us. We then knew nothing of Independent Ministers, or their peculiar principles. After experiencing some difficulties in procuring ministerial supplies, I opened a correspondence with Lady Anne Erskine, and several individuals were sent, the preaching of many of whom was signalized for great noise and little knowledge. We saw these materials would not answer. I then wrote to Mr. Haldane, of Scotland, and a

Mr. Morrison was sent, (see letter to Lady A. Erskine,) a worthy young man, about twenty or twenty-one years of age. On his arrival at my house, I was surprised to perceive that he was, in his personal appearance, a simple youth. On the following evening he preached for us, and certainly proved himself, though a young scribe, well instructed in the law. He was at length ordained as the minister of the congregation. There was a great difference between him and Lady Anne Erskine's preachers. I had previously felt it my duty to write to her ladyship respecting her supplies, advising her to open a correspondence with sensible persons in those congregations in which they might labour; and by this means obtain an accurate knowledge of the character and principles of the men she sent forth. This plan would enable her ladyship to compare the different accounts she received, and thereby form a correct opinion as to their respective worth. I suggested the same views to Mr. Haldane. We all know these men were generally taken from their various occupations, brought into an academy in which they received a superficial education, and were then sent forth as instructors."

CHAPTER VI.

MINISTRY OF THE REV. CLAUDIUS MORRISON—REMARKS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF SEPARATISM—MR. BLEST'S TEMPORARY REMOVAL FROM SLIGO—MR. MAIBEN'S DEATH—DISTRACTED STATE OF THE INDEPENDENT CONGREGATION—MR. BLEST'S ENDEAVOURS TO COUNTERACT THE EVIL.

THE Rev. Claudius Morrison arrived in Sligo towards the close of the year 1800, and his ministry was terminated by death in October, 1812. He was a man whose holy life and conversation adorned his Christian profession. Of him it might in truth be said that he was "an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile." An undeviating adherence to what he considered principle, was a prominent trait in his character. He was attached to independency, and soon brought his congregation to acquiesce in his views of church government. He adopted the theory of the strictest voluntarism—that is, receiving no ministerial support except from individuals who were actually in church-membership with him. His sentiments in this respect were influenced by the most disinterested mo-

tives, as they militated against the competency of his pecuniary means, and were opposed to the views of his most attached friends.

He entered upon his ministry at a period of much religious excitement; novelty was the order of the day, and the sound doctrine of the Reformation was considered as antiquated. A Scotch author of the name of Sandeman had written strictures on the Rev. James Hervey's *Theron and Aspasio*, about half a century previously. The following extracts are taken from Buck's Theological Dictionary, as presenting in a condensed form the peculiar views of this writer on doctrinal points:—

“Justifying faith is no more than a simple belief of the truth, or the divine testimony passively received by the understanding; and that this divine testimony carries in itself sufficient ground of hope to every one who believes it, without any thing wrought in us or done by us to give it a particular direction to ourselves. . . . This notion of faith by excluding all exercise or concurrence of the will with the Gospel way of salvation, confounds the faith of devils with that of Christians, and so is calculated to deceive the souls of men. It has also been observed that though Mr. Sandeman

admits of the acts of faith and love as fruits of believing the truth, yet all his godliness consisting (as he acknowledges to Mr. Pike) *in love to that which first relieved him*, it amounts to nothing but self-love. And as self-love is a stranger to all those strong affections expressed in the hundred and nineteenth psalm towards the law of God, he cannot admit of them as the language of a good man, but applies the whole psalm to Christ, though the person speaking acknowledges that, before he was afflicted, he went astray. Others have thought that from the same principle it were easy to account for the bitterness, pride, and contempt which distinguish the system; for self-love, say they, is consistent with the greatest human aversion to all beings, divine and human, excepting so far as they become subservient to us."

The Rev. John Walker unhappily became, to a considerable extent, a convert to such unscriptural sentiments; and from that period, alienation of affectionate feeling towards his former Christian friends, became inveterate and permanent. Through his means these opinions got into extensive circulation, and produced sad havoc among those who looked up to him as a spiritual leader. Under his auspices a sect of

Separatists was formed, and designated as "The Church of Christ assembling in Stafford-street, Dublin." For a while it was a great object of attraction, and the public interest was much increased from its being headed by an individual who had sacrificed his collegiate honours and distinctions from purely conscientious motives. An outcry was raised against the Established Church, as a member of antichrist; and the Church of Scotland, and every dissenting body were also objects of equal abhorrence. What was termed *obedience to the laws of Christ's house*, became the watchword of the party; and the most exalted piety, when unconnected with these sectarian peculiarities, was denounced in the strongest language, and viewed with less complacency than open profanity. Communion in prayer, or any other religious exercise, with any person not in fellowship with them was considered as a grievous sin; whilst, on the other hand, a disregard of the Lord's day, and indulgence in worldly amusements were attempted to be justified by very inconclusive arguments.

These opinions were propagated with much zeal and ability, and many simple-minded Christians were entrapped into an adoption of them. The contracted view which was taken

of faith, as the assent of the understanding to the truth of a certain proposition, and of the operation of God's Spirit as merely employed in bringing it before the mind, presented, in several instances, the melancholy spectacle of an enlightened head and an unsanctified heart. Many excellent persons who were preserved from imbibing these doctrines to their full extent, were captivated by what they esteemed simple and clear statements of the Gospel. Among such characters was the Rev. Claudius Morrison. However, increasing knowledge and more matured experience soon induced him to retrace his steps; but a spirit of disunion among the members of his newly-constituted Independent church speedily manifested itself to such an alarming degree, that his ministerial authority was totally inadequate to its effectual suppression.

Much about this time two powerful obstacles were removed which would have prevented its full development. Mr. Blest withdrew from general mercantile business, in which he had been hitherto engaged, and removed to Greenville, at which he had spent many of his youthful years. And in May, 1806, Mr. Maiben entered into the rest prepared for the people of God.

He died at the advanced age of eighty-two, and until a few years previous to his dissolution his bodily strength and mental faculties remained unimpaired. Few men were more useful in their day and generation. He consecrated to the Lord the first fruits of his increase ; and considered no personal or pecuniary sacrifice too great, when it had for its object the promotion of true religion. To a Christian friend who visited him a few days before his death he remarked, " I have been latterly thinking much of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I expect soon to be with him." He then feebly repeated the entire of that beautiful hymn commencing—" There is a fountain filled with blood." On the evening before his dissolution, he expressed an earnest wish that one of his daughters, with whom he then resided, would enter into conversation with him, and upon her inquiring as to the subject about which he was most anxious to speak, he replied with much emphasis, " The unspeakable love of the Lord Jesus Christ to lost sinners." Thus we see that a crucified Redeemer solely occupied his thoughts in a dying hour. Upon that solid and imperishable foundation he had, during a long period of life, built all his hopes for eternity, and his

almost expiring breath gave testimony that it was an anchor to his soul both sure and steadfast. He altogether lost sight of that integrity of principle which had rendered his name proverbial and his indefatigable exertions in the cause of God; glorying in nothing but the cross of Christ. Mr. Blest was summoned to attend the closing scene. He found him incapable of giving utterance to his feelings, but he pressed his hand in token of affectionate recognition. He calmly fell asleep in Jesus, exchanging an earthly for an eternal sabbath. He was followed to the grave by a vast concourse of people, many of whom shed tears of gratitude over the remains of one who had been their benefactor in temporal and spiritual things.

Mr. Blest's removal from Sligo, and Mr. Maiben's death left the religious party with whom they had been so long connected without any persons of sufficient influence to control the spirit of controversy which had sprung up in it. Mr. Blest frequently came to Sligo, whenever any particular subject was discussed, and endeavoured to quell the rising storm of angry debate. But notwithstanding his most strenuous exertions, matters at length came to a crisis, and two distinct sections diverged from

the main body. The one adopted the peculiarities of separatism, and the other professed what are termed Baptist principles ; but after maintaining for some years a fluctuating existence, both have long since disappeared as visible communities. The part of the congregation which was likeminded with Mr. Blest remained attached to Mr. Morrison, and it was to the individuals composing it that he was indebted for his subsequent support. His scriptural preaching and consistent deportment endeared him to them, and his memory is still cherished by all who knew him. He entered upon his public ministry at a very early age, and he was called to his reward when his mind was rapidly maturing by study and experience. Had his life been spared, he would no doubt have been a useful character in the sphere of his labours. His mild and childlike disposition was ill suited to grapple with the conflicting elements of anarchy and confusion by which he was surrounded ; and if Mr. Blest had not assumed the helm, and maintained his important position with unflinching resolution and indomitable perseverance, the cause of vital godliness in that denomination, as far as human agency could have effected it, would have sunk into annihilation.

It was a period of much uneasiness to him. He saw sectarian antinomianism, as an enemy, coming in like a flood upon many connected with him by the ties of kindred and friendship, and he felt it his duty to raise up a standard against it. He published a pamphlet on the subject of separatism, and the reader will find in the Appendix two letters which he wrote to the Rev. John Walker. Though unsuccessful in quarters in which, perhaps, he felt most interested, he was certainly very instrumental in preventing the dissemination of the evil to an extent to which it otherwise would have reached.

“Church-making,” as he termed it, was an object of his detestation, and he spared no effort to counteract such a practice in others. He lived to witness a better spirit prevalent among his Christian friends ; and during his subsequent residence in Sligo, when his sphere of usefulness became more extensive, it was his constant aim to unite his religious acquaintances of all denominations, that their conduct might present to the world the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BLEST'S RESIDENCE IN GREENVILLE—RETURNS TO SLIGO AS AGENT OF THE LONDON HIBERNIAN SOCIETY—APPOINTMENT OF THE REV. WILLIAM URWICK TO THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL, SLIGO—THE REV. WM. C. ARMSTRONG THEN CURATE OF SLIGO—VISIT OF THE REV. ARCHDEACON DIGBY TO SLIGO, AND ITS HAPPY RESULTS—THE REV. JEMMET PARKE—CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE CLOSING OF THE SLIGO THEATRE—DEATH OF THE VERY REV. DEAN BOND—APPOINTMENT OF THE REV. CHARLES HAMILTON TO THE UNION OF ST. JOHN'S, SLIGO—NOTICE OF THE REV. WM. ARMSTRONG, OF CALEY—ALLUSION TO AN ADDRESS TO THE BISHOP OF ELPHIN ON HIS PROMOTION TO THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF TUAM, ETC. ETC.

DURING Mr. Blest's residence in Greenville, he was usefully employed in promoting the spiritual interests of the immediate neighbourhood. Mr. Morrison, and other dissenting ministers, occasionally visited his house for the purpose of preaching; and Mr. B. frequently collected congregations, that he might have an opportunity of addressing them on the subject of the Gospel. And without in the slightest degree assuming the ministerial office, he laboured incessantly in bringing divine truth before the minds of the

surrounding population. And few men were more successful in their endeavours to subdue the obduracy of the natural heart, or dispel the clouds of superstitious error which hovered over the minds of Romanists. In the warfare he maintained against popery, *prophecy* was the most powerful weapon in his armoury. He brought it to bear so unerringly on the understanding, that it scarcely failed to produce an abiding conviction.

When he became officially connected with the London Hibernian Society, a wide field of usefulness was opened for the exercise of his Christian exertions. Naturally of an indolent disposition; his habits and feelings seemed to undergo a complete transformation, when any religious object presented itself as a stimulus of action. His appointment as agent of the London Hibernian Society, (of which a more particular account will be given in a subsequent department of this memoir,) placed him in his proper element. It afforded him means of carrying on plans of usefulness, the want of which caused his mental energies to remain in a great measure hitherto dormant; and in their development, he manifested his suitability to originate and carry on so important an educational institution.

In May, 1814, the operations of the society became so extended that his removal to the town of Sligo, as a more public locality, was necessary; and upon his return to the scene of his former labours for the cause of God, he found the concerns of the Independent Chapel, both religious and secular, in a most ruinous condition. Sectarian dissension had fully accomplished its evil work. The most active members of the congregation had become leaders of conflicting parties, affording a melancholy exemplification of the unhappy results of a combination of spiritual pride and imperfect information on religious subjects. To accommodate a well-known adage to our present purpose, it may be truly said that in the church of God there is a place for every member, and that every member should occupy his own place; otherwise confusion will be the inevitable consequence.* Hence it may be inferred, however diversified the opinion on church government, the necessity of a regularly-constituted ministry to preserve order in the community; so that obedience to those who have the rule over us in the Lord, may not be regulated merely by per-

* This principle is strongly enforced in 1 Corinthians xii., *passim*.

sonal caprice, but be a matter of strict conscience. In popularly-constructed religious societies, the general welfare is alone consulted by those whose minds are elevated above the level of factious excitement; and it is only by a few influential persons assuming an oligarchical position, that their permanent existence is secured. If the conduct of such individuals be regulated by Christian prudence, unanimity of sentiment will be, to a certain extent, preserved; but in order to effect this, the *fortiter in re*, as well as the *suaviter in modo*, must be characteristic of their procedure. In the first age of Christianity we find ecclesiastical disorders rectified by apostolical authority, which, when the circumstances of the case required it, was delegated to such persons as Timothy and Titus; and in the records of the second century, almost from the martyrdom of the beloved disciple—the last surviving apostle—we read of individuals acting in the same episcopal capacity. This is not a suitable place to enter upon the subject of church government in a discussional way. The author merely wishes to express his own opinion, and that is:—If episcopacy had been strictly adhered to, and preserved at an early period from popish arrogancy, and since

the Reformation from dissenting waywardness, the professing church of Christ would have presented a unity of faith and practice which, alas! it does not now possess. The apostle Paul, however, rejoiced in the fact that the Gospel was preached, even though improper motives actuated the promulgators of it: and whenever or wherever God confers his blessing, the members of any portion of Christ's church militant here on earth should not remain silent, whilst the angelic choir bursts forth in anthems of joy over the conversion of sinners. We may have our conscientious convictions and decided preferences on the subject of church government, but neither should cause us to look with "an evil eye" on the proceedings of others who may esteem it their duty to attain the same object by a different path. Prejudice arising from peculiar circumstances, may influence the best of men to view an ecclesiastical institution or regulation in an unfavourable light, and much allowance must be made in forming a just estimate of their conduct. For instance, a spiritual-minded person may seek in vain for edification, as far as preaching is concerned, in the established ministry of his locality, and he feels at liberty to join the ranks of dissent.

The entire system of episcopal government then becomes chargeable, in his mind, with the partial deficiency which may have more immediately affected himself. However unjust this opinion may be, it enters largely into all his views, and produces a warping effect on his mind, however correct his sentiments on other points. Nothing proves more strongly the inconclusive reasoning adopted on such occasions than the undeniable fact, that many individuals have taken shelter in the communion of the Established Church from the storm of irreligious discord which they have encountered elsewhere. Such considerations ought to lead us to discriminate between real principle and occasional abuse. If actuated by the former, we will maintain our position for the good of others, rather than abdicate it for supposed self-edification: for, if in the path of duty, God can bless us even in the midst of spiritual destitution.

These general observations may seem to imply a wish, on the author's part, to cast censure on Mr. Blest's conduct in becoming a dissenter, and acting upon dissenting principles. But such is not really the case. The author's object is, to state candidly his own opinions,

while it is his desire to record matters connected with this memoir with the utmost impartiality. In estimating Mr. B.'s character, we must keep constantly in view, that his mind was divested of all bigotry, of which we have had, and will still have abundant proof. In that sphere of usefulness allotted to him by God, perhaps that very trait of disposition was absolutely necessary, as he was officially, as agent for the London Hibernian Society, brought into contact with persons of so many different religious denominations.

The Independent Chapel had been vacant for two years previous to Mr. Blest's removal to Sligo; as the want of sufficient means for the support of a minister had prevented the appointment of a successor to the Reverend Claudius Morrison. But when the committee of the London Hibernian Society confined their operations to the educational department of their labours, a missionary society was formed in London, under the designation of the Irish Evangelical Society; and a corresponding committee was established in Dublin. Mr. Blest immediately applied, through both these channels of communication, for the purpose of getting students from some of the

dissenting academies in England, from whom a selection might be made. His request was complied with, and several young men were sent to Sligo. Some time, however, elapsed before the congregation made choice of a person to fill the office of their minister. They were very anxious to secure the services of a Mr. Noble, but circumstances prevented his settlement in Sligo. At length in October, 1815, the Rev. William Urwick arrived there, and his piety and talents soon rendered him a general favourite with the serious-minded persons connected with the Established Church, as well as with dissent. He was ordained pastor of the Independent Church in June, 1816, and for eleven years his personal and ministerial character secured for him a well-deserved popularity. His scriptural and eloquent style of preaching attracted crowded congregations; and during that period, the religious aspect of dissent underwent an entire change. Many of the members of the original congregation still survived, and had preserved their integrity amidst that religious speculation which had proved so disastrous to many; and their matured experience, combined with Mr. Urwick's consistent and prudent conduct, enabled them

to manage matters so as to prevent divisions arising among them.

This period was decidedly the most useful portion of Mr. Blest's life. The management of the affairs of the London Hibernian Society fully occupied his time and thoughts. Though somewhat advanced in years, his mind retained its activity, and all its energies were employed in the work in which he was engaged. His daily correspondence with the visitors of schools, and monthly communications with the parent committee in London, extend to several large folio volumes; and when the necessary routine of official business is also taken into consideration, it becomes a subject of surprise that he was equal to the laborious task of sustaining such uninterrupted exertion for so many years. He considered that he was engaged in God's work, and that feeling imparted a perseverance which could not have been derived from any other motive. The success which crowned his efforts also afforded an additional stimulus; and year after year found him prosecuting, with renewed vigour, his plans of usefulness. He derived much heartfelt pleasure from the opportunities he enjoyed of renewing his acquaintance with pious individuals whom he had met

in early life, and also of becoming known to many excellent clergymen of the Established Church. He viewed the Established Church as the only effectual medium of conveying spiritual regeneration to his beloved country, and he sincerely rejoiced in every accession to the piety of her ministry. His correspondence shows that he constantly dwelt with delight upon the pleasing aspect which the contrast between the spiritual destitution of his early life, and the prevalence of vital godliness within her pale which marked the period of his matured years, presented to his mind. Although connected with a dissenting congregation, as a deacon, he would have deprecated the slightest measure which would advance the interests of dissenterism at the expense of the church. He admired the scriptural simplicity of her liturgy and her doctrines; and though he felt himself justified in his continued separation from her communion, her peace and prosperity were equally the object of his desire, and the subject of his prayer. During his latter residence in Sligo, he also frequently enjoyed the pleasure of having at his house Christian friends from England, and various parts of Ireland; and passed much profitable time in their society.

At this period the Very Rev. Dean (Bond) of Ross was the non-resident rector of the Union of St. John's, Sligo; and the spiritual duties of the town, and parish at large, devolved upon the Rev. W. C. Armstrong, now rector of Moydow, diocese of Ardagh. Mr. Blest had known him from infancy, and entertained for him feelings of sincere respect and Christian affection, evinced by his attendance upon the public worship of the parish church whenever the pulpit of the Independent Chapel happened to be vacant. In many letters written at that time, he refers with much pleasure to the correct views of divine truth which uniformly pervaded his sermons; and, as a proof of Mr. B.'s catholic spirit, he frequently urged the Rev. Wm. Digby, then Archdeacon of Elphin, to visit Sligo, to strengthen, as he expresses it, Mr. Armstrong's hands in the work of the Lord. He had enjoyed, for some time previously, a personal acquaintance with the archdeacon, whose devotedness of character shed a lustre upon the ministry of the Established Church, in the early dawns of that spirituality which has since arisen in noon-day light upon her. In his letters Mr. B. mentions the heavy responsibilities that devolved on Mr. Armstrong, as

curate of so extensive a parish; and whose public ministrations were waited upon by a congregation four times as large as any other in the diocese, and which he describes as, generally speaking, viewing religion as more than a mere profession—some anxiously inquiring, What is truth? and others having received it in the love of it. The archdeacon having felt much hesitation in complying with Mr. B.'s wishes, the latter addressed to him an interesting letter, from which the following extracts are taken :—

“16th July, 1816.

“My dear Sir—I write under circumstances of too great restriction, in point of time, fully to obviate, as I could wish, the obstacles which, in your affectionate letter of the 13th instant, you raise against our expectations of seeing you here; I shall therefore but attempt briefly to submit to your consideration a few observations connected with them, in order to induce you to review the subject. . . .

“There is, certainly, such a thing as ‘stepping out of one’s place, and exercising oneself in things too high for us.’ But would not my application of this truth be much more in point,

should I view it as stamping with presumption my present attempt to expostulate with you? Which is more inconsistent with situation and place—my acting as a Mentor, or your coming to Sligo with the good tidings of great joy, and the sweet invitation, ‘Be ye reconciled unto God?’ Now, I dare answer for it, that you will in love overlook the incongruity of the station I occupy, with the office I assume. And will the good Shepherd mark with a frown, as a ‘stepping out of place,’ an attempt to extend his kingdom and feed his lambs, by one whom he has called by his grace, and put into the ministry?

“I grant, in one sense, to preach the Gospel of the grace of God is indeed ‘too high’ for any mortal. The human mind is as capable to fathom the word *eternity*, as fully to sound the heights and depths contained in the Gospel of the grace of God; so that the apostle had good reason for the exclamation, ‘Who is sufficient for these things?’ But as there is but one rule for living and preaching—‘our sufficiency is of God’—you would extend no more beyond your line of duty in preaching before the court of St. James’s, if providentially called to it, than you do when, as a Christian, you war with

principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world.

“Happy would it have been for some who once ran well, had they been apprized of the importance of your next observation :—‘It is a great part of (a minister’s) wisdom to find his place in the church, and to stay in it.’ But surely you do not intend by this to say, that your coming here would be *irregular*. *If so, I would by no means urge it.* But if it would be *regular*, and that you have an opportunity, as a clergyman of the diocese, presented to you, *you ought not to consider yourself out of place.* If, as a Christian minister, the Lord would open for you all the pulpits in the diocese, to scatter the good seed throughout the whole of it, is it not his voice, ‘Occupy:—this is your place?’

• “Respecting your uncertainty as to the wishes of Mr. Armstrong, his note, which I received in reply to one I addressed to him on the subject, will satisfy you as to that point. When I came to the consideration of this objection, though I thought I could safely answer for him, yet apprehensive lest I might err, and willing to ascertain the leadings of Providence, I wrote to him, informing him that having occasion

frequently to address you on the subject of the schools, I thought I could learn from one of your letters, that you might probably visit Sligo, and requested to know, would it be his wish. I transcribe his reply :—‘ I can have no objection to what you propose relative to the archdeacon, and on the contrary, I should feel pleasure in seeing so amiable a man.’ Thus, as I hope every objection and doubt are removed, we may therefore expect you. May you come in the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of peace ! But when you come, lest your expectations respecting those here, who from Christian affection you wish to see, should be disappointed, give me leave to assure you, my dear sir, that you must come prepared to give—not to receive. You are pleased to esteem me a father in Christ. Did age or standing of profession give me a just claim to that truly honourable title, so I would be. But, alas ! my dear sir, truth compels me to confess, that you say what I should be rather than what I really am. There may be a branch which, viewed at a distance, seems clothed with rich foliage, but which, on a nearer approach, will be found destitute of fruit. I speak not, God knows,

from an affectation of humility, as I have no humility but that which is the result of the clearest conviction of my poverty and wretchedness. The humbling truth is, that I retain even the leaf of profession, and am not despised of all who love the image of our Lord, are among the wonders of him whose paths are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. .

“Adieu, my dear sir ; may the Lord be with your spirit and your work, and may I have the happiness soon to see you.”

One object Mr. Blest had in view, in his endeavours to prevail on the archdeacon to visit Sligo was, that he might advocate the cause of the London Hibernian Society in the pulpit of the parish church. In a subsequent letter, which Mr. B. wrote to him, he mentions that he had waited upon Mr. Armstrong, who had expressed much satisfaction at the intelligence of his coming to Sligo, and left the appointment of the day to themselves ; and that he was only waiting the return of Mr. William Hume from England, to assist him in making the necessary arrangement for the charity sermon, which was at length preached on the

3rd of November. In announcing the final settlement of the business Mr. B. writes thus to the archdeacon :—

“May this your visit to Sligo be but the pledge and earnest of many, wherein, commissioned by Him whom you serve, you may be the messenger of peace to many, very many, who will prove your crown of rejoicing in that day when grace shall appear to be grace indeed, in the reward which the fountain of all good will condescend to bestow on those who are infinitely his debtors.”

The archdeacon in due time made his much-wished-for appearance, and was very successful in his appeal in behalf of the society. At first he purposed to remain but a few days, but the prospect of usefulness was so extensive as to induce him to postpone his departure from Sligo for nearly three weeks. Mr. Blest had the satisfaction to find that his anticipations were more than fully realized, as the archdeacon was instrumental in introducing real religion into the upper classes of society to an extent hitherto unknown. The good work had been gradually though silently progressing under Mr. Arm-

strong's scriptural preaching; and the public mind was, in a great measure, in a state of preparation to be influenced by the impulse it then received. The moral soil had been carefully cultivated; so that the seed of divine truth, sown by an experienced workman in the Lord's vineyard and watered by the outpouring of God's Spirit, took deeper root, and in due season bore more abundant fruit, within the pale of the Established Church in that locality. The faithful promulgation of the Gospel, from the pulpit of the Independent Chapel, contributed much to the increase of vital godliness: but so anxious was Mr. Blest to prevent any just grounds for jealousy, that when consulted by any member of the church, on the subject of withdrawal from her communion, he strenuously opposed such a step being taken; as he always viewed his chapel as erected for the preaching of the Gospel, and not as a place to promote dissent. In fact, in proportion as the sound doctrines of the Reformation revived in the church, his feelings of attachment towards her increased. The latitudinarian views of church government which he, at an early period of his religious life imbibed from the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed, permitted his connexion

with any religious community professing scriptural sentiments; but as they were adopted more from expediency than conviction, he was divested of any prejudice which would prevent his advancing the spiritual welfare of the Established Church within the sphere allotted to him by divine Providence. In his communications to particular correspondents, immediately subsequent to the archdeacon's return to his parish, Mr. Blest alludes to the beneficial effects produced by his ministerial labours in Sligo :—

To the Rev. J. J. Fletcher, Drumkeerin.

“ November 17, 1816.

“ Your friend the archdeacon came here not only to advocate the cause of the society, but for his Master, and he was abundantly blessed in his work. All who knew the Saviour's name before his arrival were quickened afresh, and many who slept in the dust of an unrenewed state were raised, I trust, together with Christ. In point of success, I never witnessed a more promising appearance, and in point of character, I never beheld a fairer copy of an epistle of Christ, read and acknowledged of all men, than I witnessed in the spirit, conduct, and labours of the archdeacon. He preached twice in the

church, and every day and night from house to house: not formally; for his conversation in every place was one continued sermon on repentance towards God—faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ—life of communion with him—and devotedness to his glory.”

To the Rev. James Daly, Warden of Galway.

“December 14, 1816.

“ I presume you are not unacquainted with the religious sentiments, and the uncommon devotedness of Archdeacon Digby. He intended to leave this on the day after the charity sermon, but so great was the attention paid to his ministry, that he remained with us seventeen days, and wherever he spent the day he was employed to a late hour at night in testifying of the grace of God.—The number of devoted Christians who attend the parish church are not a few, and could your convenience permit you to visit Sligo, I have no doubt but the result would be pleasing to yourself, and a blessing to many. Being honoured with the residence of the archdeacon with me while he remained here, I beg to presume for a similar favour from you, should you come. Our curate is an amiable and excellent clergyman,

evangelical in sentiment, and would, I can answer for it, afford you an opportunity of preaching. The furtherance of the Gospel, which is my sole motive, will plead my excuse for taking this liberty."

Mr. Blest addressed letters of a similar nature to the Rev. J. Burke, of Loughrea, and other clergymen; but the author considers the foregoing extracts as sufficient to convey an idea of the pleasure which he enjoyed by being privileged to promote the increase of true religion in the church.

In a letter to the Rev. William Bushe, on the 18th of January, 1817, he makes the following reference to her spiritual prosperity, and also to an individual who had then but lately entered into the joy of his Lord.

"Our Lord is doing wonders; and, as if to pour contempt on those who spoke with so much confidence of the certain destruction of the Establishment in this kingdom, he is reviving his work in her every day, and decking her with stars of peculiar lustre. I mentioned in my last letter, the visit we had from the archdeacon; and I am sure you will hear with

much satisfaction that we are now favoured with a visit from one no less devoted, nor a whit behind him in zeal—the Rev. Jemmet Parke, from the county of Wexford, son of Colonel Parke, of Dunally, two miles from Sligo. Since his arrival he has preached in Drumcliffe Church, about four miles distant; and also to crowded congregations on week-days, in the villages about Dunally.”

Mr. Blest’s fourth son had, at an early period of his Christian profession, adopted the principles of separatism ; but his sentiments, at this time, underwent an entire change, which was a source of much gratification to his father. In a letter to S. Mills, Esq. of London, dated January 28, 1817, after giving a minute *exposé* of the opinions of that party, he enters into a detail of the circumstances which led to his son’s withdrawal from it :—

“ Mrs. Blest had been lately reading for a poor blind Christian woman, who spends every Lord’s day at my house, the last Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in consecutive order. My fourth son, who felt no interest in such matters, happened to be present on one occasion while his mother was thus employed,

and heard her read for some time with indifference. At length his attention was arrested, and, listening with increasing wonder, he was forced to acknowledge in his own mind, ‘This must be the finger of God.’ This conviction was instantly followed by another, ‘How is it that those with whom I am connected are hostile to this work? Must there not be an error at the root of the system I adhere to?’ The subject bore powerfully on his mind during the night, after he had retired to his own room, and doubt of the infallibility of the system led to investigation; the result of which, through the blessing of God, is the most decided change I ever witnessed. He views with horror the religious principles he had been induced to adopt many years since, when just a novice; and his Christian affection for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ burns with a more intense heat, from having been so long chilled and restrained by the damps of separatism. Happily, immediately after his restoration, I had a visit, of three days’ duration, from the Rev. Jemmet Parke—a most devoted clergyman; and he now rejoices as a bird escaped from the snare of the fowler. With the gratitude of a Christian for the restoration of a brother, and the

gratitude of a Christian parent for the salvation of a son, long involved in pernicious error, I have obtruded on your attention this testimony of my gratitude to God, and his highly-honoured instrument, the British and Foreign Bible Society."

The motives which influenced Mr. Blest's conduct, contributed much to that cordiality of religious feeling which then prevailed between members of the Established Church and evangelical dissenters in Sligo. Emulation in doing good, and not the advancement of sectarian interest, was the characteristic feature of every measure adopted for general usefulness. This revival and extension of religion was accompanied by a corresponding solicitude for the welfare of the leading religious societies. Their respective anniversaries were well attended, and liberal contributions made to their funds.

Much about this time, or perhaps somewhat later, a circumstance occurred which evidenced the improved state of public feeling. The Rev. R. H. Nixon, chaplain of Steevens' Hospital, Dublin, then on a religious deputation, perceiving a large placard on the corners of the

streets announcing the performance of the play intituled, *The Road to Ruin*, for that evening, made some suitable allusion to the demoralizing tendency of theatrical amusements. This excited the indignation of the manager, who, in retaliation, got up the play of *The Hypocrite*, among the *dramatis personæ* of which he introduced some of the most respectable religious ladies of Sligo personified as to dress and mode of speaking. This gross outrage of public decorum caused the Rev. W. C. Armstrong, then provost of the borough, to close the theatre, and also to publish a very Christian-minded address to the inhabitants, assigning his reasons for so doing. And although from party feelings, of a local nature, this unprincipled affair received magisterial sanction, in opposition to the cause of insulted religion, Mr. Armstrong's firm and prudent conduct met with the approbation of the serious-minded portion of the community at large; and the theatrical company shortly afterwards retired from Sligo.

The author cannot refrain from inserting the following extracts from a letter, written by Mr. B. to his old friend, the Rev. J. Gibson, with whom the reader is already acquainted. It is

dated, March 10th, 1817, and is descriptive of his employment at this time, and his views of the state of religion in Sligo :—

“ . . . Strange as it may appear to you, I can assure you, that your not hearing from me long since, was occasioned by want of time ; for never have I had so much business to attend to, as since I removed to Sligo. Yet, though frequently pressed above measure, and not unfrequently quite enervated with writing, I am not tired of my work : but while it accumulates, (and this it does every day,) I have reason to bless my God, that he has honoured the evening of my life with this ministration of mercy to the present and rising generation.

“ Our schools, by the account returned to the parent committee, in London, on the 25th ult. were three hundred and forty-three—our day-pupils, twenty-seven thousand five hundred and sixty-eight. All these, as they advance into the Scripture class, must have the word of God committed to memory ; and, exclusive of these, hundreds of adults are taught in our night-schools. Every district affords some trophies of divine grace, and wherever our schools are established, spiritual darkness no longer holds

its dominion, and the change, religious and moral, evidently proclaims that the work is of God. I have matters so arranged that I can inspect the whole of the schools in eleven counties in my office; nor can any master practise the slightest imposition on the society, as remuneration is regulated strictly by the proficiency of the pupils.

“I would be more minute in giving a detailed account of the good the society is doing, but your last letter holds out the hope of my seeing you shortly in Sligo. Come, and I trust your spirit will be refreshed from more sources than its prosperity. Sligo is an altered place. There are many who, when you were here, were enemies of God, but are now his friends—nay, his zealous servants. This is not tautology, for all his friends do not serve him with equal zeal. Many of them are members of the Established Church, nor do I even wish them to become dissenters. The Establishment! say you: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see. We have had lately two clergymen here.—Others talk of religion, but they have their conversation in heaven.”

His feelings respecting himself, personally,

are thus beautifully expressed in a letter to Mr. Mills, of London :—

“ 25th March, 1817.

“ The committee have been pleased to intimate, through you, their approbation of my exertions, and have voted their usual testimony of it. This I accept with gratitude and respect. And in reference to the judgment yet to be pronounced by Him whose glory is connected with the great object of the institution, and in subordination to which my every act should be directed, the utmost ambition of my soul is to hear from his lips, in the gracious language with which he once cheered the heart of a self-convicted and trembling culprit—‘ Neither do I condemn thee.’ ”

In his September communication of the following year he thus writes to the same individual :—

“ I write at this moment in my office, neatly and commodiously fitted up ; and although my antechamber is crowded with teachers, and many applicants from different parts of the country for copies of the Holy Scriptures, I enjoy in it the stillness of a convent, until the

necessary business with the former, and a desire to converse with the latter, draw me from my retirement. And although busily employed in this secluded situation from morning to night, I am confident there is not an individual among the bustlers through life—whether conspicuous as a votary of mammon—a cultivator of the sciences—a warrior, wading through fields of blood to snatch at the laurel crown of victory—enjoys such pleasurable feelings as my occupation affords. I know that a desire for the protraction of life is vain; yet there is a religious and rational fascination in the work in which I am engaged that, at times, carries my wishes far beyond the bounds of sixty years.”

These two epistolary extracts are pleasing evidences of the feelings which influenced Mr. Blest's mind, and fitted him for the important work which he superintended. We perceive in his language the effects of Christian humility, as contradistinguished from natural amiability of disposition; as the latter would have induced him to view his exertions with self-complacency, but the former caused him to consider himself as an unprofitable servant, unworthy of reward. We also see that Christian principle urged him

to prosecute his labours—not as a hireling, but from a sense of duty, arising from a conviction that they were in accordance with the divine will—and this rendered his performance of them a highly-esteemed privilege. Both these fruits of faith enabled him to act with persevering zeal amidst almost insurmountable difficulties. Knowing from long experience his own insufficiency, he confided solely in that strength which perfects human weakness; and looking to the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift, he was endued with ability of thought and action equal to the existing exigency. Firm reliance on the faithfulness of Jehovah to the promises of his revealed word was the polar star of his hopes and conduct in the gloomiest hour of personal and official embarrassment; and under its guidance he pursued his onward course, and scarcely ever failed of eventual success. Did the limits of this memoir permit the publication of his correspondence with the parent committee, the perusal of their interesting contents would corroborate fully the truth of these observations.

In a letter, written to a personal friend just recovered from severe illness, we have a further

insight of his religious sentiments. He thus addresses him :—

“I regret that you have been so seriously afflicted, but rejoice that in this trying situation you found the Saviour testified unto you in the word of reconciliation as the ‘shadow of a great rock in a weary land.’ The word of truth reveals him as such, but the crowning blessing is to know him as thus revealed. You have seen enough in the religious world to perceive the necessity of this distinction : for many mistake a knowledge merely theoretical, for the uniting, justifying, and soul-quickenning revelation of Him by the word to the heart ; and thereby encompass themselves with sparks of their own kindling. Their whole zeal, consequently terminates in floating speculations, which may be likened to balloons highly inflated ; and being destitute of that anchor which enters within the veil, they are carried about with every wind of doctrine. You found, when on the confines of the valley of the shadow of death, that nothing but God himself and the consciousness of his presence could cheer your sinking spirit in that trying hour. No

distinction of party—no fancied superiority of sect—no refinement in theories, doctrinal or ecclesiastical, could be a substitute for Christ formed within the soul, the hope of glory, or be admitted for a moment to occupy the mind. May his glory, and bringing sinners acquainted with him, and to experience the power of his resurrection, be therefore the sole business of our lives.”

The episcopate of the last Archbishop of Tuam, at this time Bishop of Elphin, contributed much to the increase of religion in that diocese in which Sligo is situated. The judicious selection of faithful clergymen for every vacancy, secured an efficient parochial ministry. The hitherto neglected Protestant population, thinly scattered over the rural districts, was carefully sought out, and its spiritual wants attended to. The happy consequence of which was, that scriptural information became more extensive in every grade of society; and religion, instead of being the subject of derision, was felt in many cases in all its sanctifying influence, and in all, generally speaking, became an object of respect. Many of the leading gentry participated in these spiritual blessings, and they

cordially co-operated in every plan of religious improvement. At length, in the year 1819, the death of Lord Decies led to the appointment of Doctor Trench to the primacy of Connaught; and while Mr. Blest rejoiced that his Grace was destined to occupy a more exalted station in the church, he felt much anxiety as to the sanction which his successor would give to the operations of the London Hibernian Society. His Grace, after much patient investigation of its principles and proceedings, had granted to it his countenance and support, and Mr. B. dreaded the possibility of the new bishop assuming even a position of neutrality. His fears, however, were groundless, as Doctor Leslie in due time became favourable to it, and accepted the office of vice-president.

The death of the Very Rev. Dean Bond, shortly afterwards, left the Union of St. John's, Sligo, at the disposal of the bishop, and the appointment of the succeeding rector was, likewise, a subject of much solicitude to Mr. B. For many years Mr. Armstrong had promoted the welfare of the society in every available way, and Mr. B. looked forward with much anxiety to the selection which would be made for so important a parish. The Rev. Charles

Hamilton, vicar-general of Dromore, was appointed; and he also became a warm friend of the society.

Before Dean Bond's death, the plan of a second church for Sligo was thought of; but no progress was made towards its erection until Mr. Hamilton's accession to the parish. Mr. Armstrong was transferred to the curacy of it, but his Grace of Tuam soon removed him to the parish of Moydow, in the diocese of Ardagh. His successor was the late Rev. William Armstrong, of Enniskillen, whose natural benevolence of disposition, sanctified by the influence of Christian principle, urged him to the most active exertion for the promotion of the spiritual and temporal welfare of his ministerial charge. His moral and religious worth was more known by his actions than loud-sounding profession. During the eventful period of the cholera visitation, in the autumn of 1832, he remained undaunted at his post of danger. Though frequently confined from extreme exhaustion, he was mercifully preserved from the fatal epidemic; but when recruited by a brief relaxation, he would issue forth on errands of mercy wherever his presence was required. No man ever did more good with so little ostentation. In the

spring of 1840, after twenty years spent in the active service of his Master, he was, after a severe but short illness, summoned to his heavenly reward. Pastoral duty brought him to the couch of disease. In his endeavours to instil the consolations of the Gospel of peace into the departing spirit of an aged female labouring under fever, he caught the disease, and sunk into a comparatively premature grave, universally loved and respected. It was to him, in conjunction with a truly pious lady still living, that the orphans of individuals carried off by cholera were indebted for an asylum in which they were supported and educated; and the last time he appeared in public was, to advocate the cause of the Sligo Protestant Orphan Society. To sum up his character in a few words—it may be truly said of him, that he combined the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. While possessed of much discrimination of human character, that “charity which thinketh no evil” invariably regulated his thoughts and actions. His piety was truly sincere, and his friendship warm and disinterested.

The clergy of the diocese of Elphin presented an address to their diocesan on his lordship's

promotion to the archbishopric of Tuam, already referred to ; and on this occasion Mr. Blest thus addresses his friend, Archdeacon Digby :—

“ I now fulfil my intention of expostulating with you for not directing the newspaper to be forwarded to me which contained the excellent address of the clergy of this diocese to his Grace the Archbishop of Tuam, and his most excellent reply, at which I was barely permitted to glance for a moment this evening by our mutual friend, Mr. Hume. What ! was it because your humble servant frequents a conventicle, that he was not permitted to share in the gratification in which, as a Christian, he had a right to participate, and in which none more sincerely rejoices ?

“ I need not tell *you*, that both the address and reply afforded to *me* great satisfaction. But I will say that if I had had an opportunity before the presentation of the address, I would have procured one to accompany it from the only congregation of evangelical Protestants in this diocese not under his episcopal care, as cordial, as devoted, and as sincere as that which emanated from the clergy under his late superintendence. But although this oppor-

tunity of thus recording the sense we entertain of his Grace's worth, and our high respect for his character, has passed unimproved, yet equally interested in the prosperity of Zion with those who were so happily privileged, we will not cease, in sincere union with them, to supplicate the throne of our common Lord, that his servant, the Archbishop, may be long spared the Ussher and the Bedell of our land."

In a letter to the Venerable Archdeacon Grace, of Westport, written a few days afterwards, Mr. B. thus alludes to the same subject:—

"I congratulate you on the accession of the present archbishop to your diocese. He will assist you and hold up your hands in every good work. Probably Archdeacon Digby will be also removed to Tuam. Thanks be to God! the Gospel is spreading on every side, and the fire that has been kindled proving its origin—a 'live coal,' taken at the command of the Lord of Sabaoth, from off the altar."

In a communication addressed much about this period to the Rev. William Henry, one

of the senior ministers of the Tahitean mission, Mr. B. thus alludes to the Church of Ireland :

“ The Spirit of God is poured out on the Establishment, and a goodly number of the clergy now proclaim the righteousness of God our Saviour, and, shall I say it? *they preach a purer Gospel than the dissenters.* The former have but one object in view—the conversion of sinners. Church-making and party interests necessarily divide the attention of the latter.”

From a second letter to Archdeacon Grace the following extract is taken :—

“ You have long laboured among a rebellious and gainsaying people, but you have been spared to receive a great reward. You see a host raised up in the church, boldly to confess that truth, for your advocacy of which you were long a *speckled bird.* Nay, you have been spared to see the archiepiscopal throne of your province filled by one who glories in crowning Jesus Lord of all.”

When a review is taken of the hostility evinced in later days by dissenters against the church, it is gratifying to have such sentiments

as the foregoing on record from the pen of one whose mind was elevated above the influence of sectarian predilections. He was a stranger to those feelings which would call down fire from heaven against every principle and practice not consonant with peculiar views of things. While he acted strictly in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience in every matter, he deprecated conduct which was calculated to excite the fiercest passions of the human heart ; and we shall find that at a later period of his life he shrunk with abhorrence from that unhallowed coalition of Protestant dissenterism with superstition, heresy, and even atheism, for the overthrow of the national altar. He trembled for the awful consequences which would ensue from the consummation of such combined wishes and exertions. He valued too highly an ecclesiastical establishment, recognising the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the rule of faith, to be instrumental in removing a stone from the sacred edifice.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PAINFULLY INTERESTING DETAIL RESPECTING A JEWISH
IMPOSTOR, THE REV. J. J. HEYDECK.

THE JEWISH EXPOSITOR for August, 1821, contains a correspondence which was printed and published by the kind friends who had sent out the Rev. Joseph Wolffe on a mission to the East. Among the letters was one from a Rev. John Joseph Heydeck, who designated himself Professor of Oriental Languages in the Royal College of St. Isidore, Madrid. It was written in very scriptural language, and with much apparent zeal for the spiritual welfare of out-cast Israel. Immediately on reading it, Mr. Blest felt it his duty to request the Rev. John Morrison, formerly Secretary of the London Hibernian Society, to whom he was then writing, to caution the Rev. Mr. Hughes of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the Rev. Mr. Owen also, together with the secretary of the Jews' Society, against opening any correspondence with Heydeck, until he had previously

communicated with them on the subject. He describes him as a Jew, and educated a Jesuit.

In the December of that year Mr. Blest sent the following painfully interesting detail to London, which the author inserts in this memoir with less reluctance, as all the parties mentioned in it are now no more. It affords a striking instance of the fearful lengths to which persons of talent, but devoid of the sanctifying influence of religion, will proceed in hypocritical practices :

“ In autumn, 1784, an advertisement appeared in ‘ The Sligo Journal,’ announcing that on the following Lord’s day a sermon would be preached in the Presbyterian meeting-house by the Rev. John Joseph Heydeck, a converted Rabbi. Being much interested in the fallen state of Israel, according to the flesh, and strongly impressed with a conviction, derived from the writings of the prophets and apostles, that the Lord would yet turn back the captivity of Jacob, I was very desirous to converse with him; and although not intimately acquainted with the Presbyterian minister of Sligo, I resolved to wait upon him, in order to be introduced to his Jewish visitor. I soon enjoyed that pleasure, but at this distance of time I

cannot well recollect the various topics of conversation during my first interview with him. I remember, however, distinctly that the minister, (who was opposed to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel,) apprehending that some sentiments which had been advanced probably by myself, were connected with the doctrine of the election of grace, strongly reprobated the idea, and was proceeding at some length in his argument, when he was interrupted by the Rabbi, who exclaimed with much emphasis—‘Election! O sir, I am a living witness of the truth of that doctrine. But for the sovereign election of grace, I would have remained a Jew, under all the influence of that blindness and enmity which perpetuate the misery of my brethren according to the flesh.’ Nothing more was necessary to confirm my opinion of his sincerity, as he was at that moment indebted to the gentleman whom he had thus fearlessly addressed for the clothes he wore and his preservation from starvation; having but a few days previously called upon him almost naked and pennyless.

“The information I then got respecting him was, that he had been shipwrecked on the northern coast of Ireland, during a voyage from England, and that his object in visiting

this country, was an expected appointment as sub-librarian in the department of oriental literature in Trinity College, Dublin — that on reaching the shore he had been deprived of his clothes, and nearly murdered by the peasantry, who plundered the ship, and was obliged to travel on foot to Sligo, in the wretched plight in which he made his first appearance; and that the Presbyterian minister, fully satisfied with his intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew and other languages, and perceiving that his countenance strongly marked his Jewish origin, had received him without the slightest hesitation into his house, and provided him with a suit of his own clothes.

“Much pleased with my Jewish friend, I hastened to impart the glad tidings to my religious acquaintances, (who were then indeed but few in Sligo,) that the Lord had recovered one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I was anxious also to engage them to attend at the Presbyterian meeting-house on the following Lord’s day, and to recommend both the preacher and the congregation, which I expected would be numerous, to their prayers. I note this latter circumstance, as an occurrence was connected with it which has never since been obliterated

from my memory. Being engaged with my family in our social worship on the Saturday evening, my mind became confused and incapable of proceeding when I commenced my supplications in behalf of him whom I esteemed a servant of God. I felt as if all my faculties were enveloped in a mist of darkness, and I must confess that I viewed this unusual circumstance as little less than a supernatural interdiction. This unfavourable impression caused me to watch narrowly his countenance in the pulpit on the following day ; and I very distinctly perceived that every feature was distorted during prayer, and indicated any thing but a frame of mind in harmony with the exercise. Subsequent discoveries led me to conclude that he must have been guilty of the deepest hypocrisy.

“The meeting-house was completely filled, and an attentive auditory listened to the very interesting and well-digested narrative which he gave of his conversion to Christianity. He had been a Jew by birth, and educated a Rabbi. In the course of his preaching to his synagogue congregation, he expounded the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. On retiring, his conscience was convinced that he had given an incorrect view of that remarkable prophecy, and that the suf-

fering individual alluded to in it could not have been Moses, nor any of the persons substituted for the real character, by Jewish commentators. A sense of his ignorance on so important a point, preyed on his spirits—his mind became deeply affected, and his bodily health impaired—he sought seclusion from society, and spent much of his time in solitary walks, thinking over the subject of his anxious inquiry. One evening the Calvinist minister of the place in which he resided met him, and looking earnestly at him, remarked, ‘You are unwell, sir! your soul is wounded.’ Surprised that a stranger so accurately described the state of his mind, he entered into conversation with him, which terminated in a promise on his part to receive a New Testament and carefully peruse it. When possessed of it, so great was his enmity to the name of Jesus, that previous to his consecutive perusal of it, he minutely turned over its pages, and blotted out the word wherever he found it. His study, however, of its contents, issued in his conversion to Christianity. He was baptized, and being persecuted, had to fly from his native country. He had taken refuge in England; was intimately acquainted with the Rev. William Romaine, to whose care he had com-

mitted his manuscripts. He had been in Dublin, and introduced by Colonel Vallancey to the Provost and Board of Trinity College. He had been on a visit to England, and was returning when he suffered shipwreck.

“When I subsequently became more intimately acquainted with him, I must say that all doubts of his sincerity vanished, for a time, from my mind. The Presbyterian minister was no longer troubled with his support. Some Christian friends supplied all his wants, and he was hospitably entertained while he remained in Sligo. His conversation was highly interesting; his comments on Jewish sacrifices, priesthood, &c., and his illustrations of Gospel truth, in their typical reference to the character and works of the Lord Jesus Christ, were truly delightful, and in many instances new to those who heard him. He at length took his departure for Dublin; shortly after which a gentleman resident in Sligo called upon me, and Heydeck became the subject of conversation. He assured me that he was fully justified in viewing him as an arrant hypocrite. He had been, for some time after his arrival in Sligo, lodging in a mean house of entertainment on the quay, and assumed the character of a

Romish priest. He was frequently intoxicated, and spoke the Irish language fluently; and when walking in company with the Presbyterian minister a few days after his introduction to him, he happened to meet his former hostess, to whom he intimated by signs not to recognise him. I endeavoured to rebut these charges by mentioning the prejudice with which the lower orders viewed any testimony in favour of Protestantism, and their proneness to traduce any converts to its profession; but my informant still persisted in the truth of his statement.

“ This revived my former suspicion; and I immediately wrote to the Rev. Wm. Romaine, requesting to know whether what he had mentioned respecting him was true. I received no reply. He was actually admitted into Trinity College, Dublin, and Mr. Andrew Maiben received a letter from him requesting a loan of money until his salary would become due. Mr. M. consulted me on the subject: and I advised him not to remit it directly to Heydeck, but to request him to call upon a Mr. Hill, to whom he had given a letter of introduction; and at the same time to write to Mr. H. to attend to his wants. Mr. Maiben's reply was truly characteristic of his Christian-

mindfulness—‘No,’ said the good man, ‘he is a sincere believer, and may be offended at any appearance of suspicion on my part. The enemy of souls may suggest that my hesitation in complying with his wishes, is a proof that the profession of brotherly love among Christians is not real.’ Mr. Maiben, without further delay, made him the desired remittance, the receipt of which he never acknowledged. Some time afterwards, we were much alarmed by a communication from Mr. Hill, stating that Heydeck had disappeared, and that the general opinion was, he had been murdered by the Jews of Dublin, and also that a legal search had been made in several of their houses, but without effect. It was not, however, long until our fears respecting his personal safety were quieted; as the Scottish newspapers announced his appearance in either Glasgow or Edinburgh, and that he was regarded in the college as a prodigy of oriental literature, and a rich trophy of divine grace. He soon, however, left that place; and although he had refused money while there, he accepted a contribution made to supply his necessities by some religious characters in Scotland, and which had been forwarded to him after his departure. Some

of them had taken such an interest in him, that they actually followed him with their pecuniary gift. I had heard of his having got into his possession a lady's watch while in Dublin, which he carried off with him; and when informed of his visit to Scotland, I again wrote to Mr. Romaine, from whom I received the following reply :—

“ ‘My dear Sir—I acknowledge the receipt of two letters from you. I did not answer your first, because I was in hopes that something might have appeared in Heydeck's favour, and the storm would have blown over. But I find the impostor grows worse and worse, and therefore, though far against my will, I am forced to tell you that every thing he said of me was false. I do not know him. The first time I heard of him was from you. I have no manuscript of his in my hands. He has repeated at Edinburgh, at Glasgow, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and goes on telling in all places the same lies which he told you. He is a complete child of his father. These days are to abound with such. May He, who is truth itself, by His Holy Spirit and word, keep you from impostors; especially from those who come as angels of

light. Stick close to Him your divine teacher. Pray for his Spirit to shine upon his word, that you may understand it clearly, believe it steadfastly, and thereby enjoy the blessings promised in it. This will preserve you in the faith, and help you against all temptations to go on your way rejoicing. So prays your friend and servant in the Lord Christ,

“ ‘ W. ROMAINE.

“ ‘ P.S.—I was, and am still, from home, or I would have acknowledged your letter sooner.

“ ‘ Bristol, August 18, 1785.’

“ This letter removed all doubt from my mind respecting Heydeck ; and curiosity alone influenced me to make any further inquiry respecting him, and my desire for information was soon gratified, by a description of an impostor given in one of the London newspapers, which, though it did not mention the name of the individual, yet so corresponded with the traits of Heydeck’s character known to me, as to establish fully his identity with it. The subject of animadversion had been the son of a Jew who professed conversion to Popery in France, and in accordance with the practice of the Jesuits, who had been instrumental in

effecting it, the son, then a mere child, had been taken as a hostage for his father's sincerity. He had been educated by them for a member of their order, but while he remained under their care, he had the address to elude all their vigilance, and hold private correspondence with his father, who was still a Jew in principle. When fully educated and prepared for serving in any of their missions, he had escaped from them, and arrived in England, where he successfully practised many impositions, especially one of defrauding a religious lady of a large sum of money. As circumstances permitted, he had occasionally acted the part of a Romish priest, a Calvinist minister, a Methodist preacher, &c. &c.

“ This account closed all the information I could obtain about him after he left Scotland, and I have reason to think that his subsequent movements could not be traced. How great, then, was my surprise at again hearing of him after a lapse of thirty-six years. Probably there is not another individual now living in the United Kingdom who could give the information respecting him which I now communicate; and probably it is not without a particular providence that I have had it in my power to

point out the true character of an individual who, from the imposing introduction he has had to the Jews' and Bible Societies, might have done serious injury.

"His letter in the *Jewish Expositor* for August last evinces the same scriptural information which marked his communications to Mr. Maiben and myself thirty-six years ago; and, on the other hand, from his present situation in St. Isidore's College, Madrid, he must be a Roman Catholic, and most likely a priest, and, from his early education, a Jesuit. So that he must be still equally the hypocrite as when he assumed the different characters already referred to."

At this interval of time, the author has had no means of ascertaining how far the information contained in the foregoing detail was acted on; but it appears to have been solicited from Mr. Blest, as some months intervened between its transmission and the caution already referred to, which he sent to London respecting Heydeck.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH OF MRS. BLEST—HIS SECOND MARRIAGE—DEATH OF
HIS SECOND DAUGHTER—THE REV. WILLIAM URWICK'S
REMOVAL TO DUBLIN.

MR. BLEST, though now advanced in life, still retained his usual activity of mind. He was always very sensitive as to change of atmospheric temperature, and frequently threatened with dropsy of the chest. But his thoughts were so occupied with official business, that when prohibited by his medical attendant from writing, he carried on his daily and complicated correspondence by an amanuensis, even when respiration was painful to him.

In his domestic circle he had enjoyed a long period of uninterrupted happiness, associated with a fondly-attached wife, and affectionate children. Of a very numerous family, only five sons and two daughters lived to maturity; and at the period to which reference is now made, unless in the respective removals of the former to different destinations in life, no change had occurred for many years. Death, however,

entered his dwelling early in the year 1826. Mrs. Blest had been long an invalid. Although in the enjoyment of tolerable health, a rheumatic affection had deprived her of the use of her limbs for nearly twelve years; but her faith in the wisdom of divine arrangement enabled her to submit, without a murmur, to the deprivation under which she laboured. She had been early trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord by her pious father, and was taught to revere religion, from beholding its doctrines and precepts so fully exemplified by his principles and conduct. When her own mind was brought under its influence, her Christian consistency adorned her religious profession. During the period of her protracted affliction, she learned to read the Irish Scriptures; and much of her time was profitably employed in conversation with the many inquirers after truth who frequented Mr. Blest's house, and in reading to them in their vernacular language the word of inspiration. Her natural amiability tended much to regulate Mr. Blest's warm temperament of mind, and prevented him from acting, as much as he otherwise would have done, on the impulse of the moment. The closing scene of life was to her one of much bodily suffering, but her

hope was placed on the sure foundation laid in Zion, and the lamp of the Saviour's love brightened the gloom of the valley of death. As an aged pilgrim, she entered the portals of eternity leaning on the staff of the divine promises, and the rod of God's recognition comforted her departing spirit. They had been married at an early age, and their long conjugal union was marked by the most sincere and uninterrupted mutual attachment. Shortly after his bereavement he thus expressed himself in a letter to a friend :—

“I would have replied to your kind letter sooner, but for a domestic visitation which has absorbed my every thought—the removal of my beloved and most exemplary partner in life. Happily there were no dregs in the cup of affliction I was thus called to drink. For more than forty years we took sweet counsel together, and her latter end was peace—a peace, which was the fruit of the full assurance of the understanding, and of faith in Him into whose hands, and in the words of Stephen (her last words), she resigned her spirit.”

In the course of the following year he married

a truly Christian lady, whom he had long known and highly esteemed. She was a daughter of the late Arthur Irwin, Esq., of the county of Sligo. No person could be more calculated to promote his happiness. From the moment when, like Mary of old, she had chosen that better part which could not be taken from her, it was her constant delight to sit in self-abasement at her Saviour's feet, and learn of Him who was lowly of heart. Her subsequent life was devoted to the service of God—she went about doing good to the bodies and souls of her fellow-mortals—visiting the wretched abodes of destitution and ignorance, and searching after the outlaws of society imprisoned in the county gaol. She practised the most rigid self-denial to enable her to meet the frequent demands on her generosity, in the exercise of which she was solely regulated by her pecuniary means.

In a few months afterwards, Mr. Blest was visited by a second domestic bereavement, in the removal of his younger daughter. Naturally of a weak constitution, she had been for some years in a declining state of health. She inherited much of her father's talents, and acquired a knowledge of several of the modern languages.

She had, from an early age, been connected with the religious party formed by Mr. Walker, but previously to her death separated from it. This latter step afforded her father much satisfaction, as he was strongly opposed to that system. And although her adherence to it did not influence their affectionate intercourse as parent and child, it was a source of heartfelt grief to Mr. Blest, as it prevented her from uniting with the family in any religious exercise. From the tenacity with which she clung to the peculiarities of separatism, he had long despaired of her renunciation of them; and when, contrary to his expectation, the conversation of a Christian friend (Major Pringle, of the Royal Artillery) produced the much-desired effect, it contributed not a little to his happiness. Mr. B. thus alludes to the subject in a letter to his dear friend, the Rev. Wm. Digby :—

“ Feb. 23d, 1825.

“ You have heard, I presume, that my daughter Eliza has escaped from the Separatists; and, to make up for lost time while inactive through the stupor of the system, she has been particularly active ever since.”

During the latter years of her life, she was

much afflicted with frequent indisposition. Her complaint at length became hopeless, and her sufferings terminated in death, about May, 1827; but it was her father's happiness to look forward in sure and certain hope, to a reunion before the throne of God.

Other matters at this time occupied much of his thoughts. The removal of the Rev. William Urwick left a vacancy in the Independent Chapel of Sligo, as he accepted the appointment of minister to York-street chapel, Dublin. Mr. Blest appreciated fully the important effects of his labours while resident in Sligo, and regretted deeply his voluntary withdrawal from the sphere of usefulness in which he considered that he had been providentially placed. The high estimation in which his character and talents were held, lessened considerably the influence possessed previously by persons who, as leaders of religious factions, had caused the unhappy divisions already described in this memoir. The correspondence which Mr. Blest opened with persons in England and Scotland, indicates the deep interest which he took in the affair. To one of these friends he writes—

“Nothing led to the separation but the

conviction he (Mr. Urwick) entertained that the cause of religion required his presence in Dublin.

The event will, I trust, justify the step; but if increasing usefulness in the town, neighbourhood, and county, and the numerous and earnest wishes of a church and congregation, may be considered as legitimate objections to his removal, they certainly were not wanting."

To another he says on the same subject:—

"Our house is left to us desolate, not, I trust, as a judgment, but in accordance with that mercy which has marked the dispensations of our Lord's providence in the rise and progress of his Gospel in this town. Can you help us to a successor—a man of God—possessing deep knowledge of the ever blessed Gospel—fervent piety and zeal—and abilities natural and acquired, such as will not disappoint a taste formed by the highly respectable labours of Mr. Urwick? If an individual thus prepared to succeed him could be procured, he would meet in Sligo with a most affectionate and attentive people."

Such were the feelings he expressed on the

occasion; but his own departure from Sligo shortly afterwards, and subsequent residence in the Irish metropolis, severed his connexion with dissenting operations, and relieved his mind of the anxiety which he would, no doubt, have felt if he remained there.

The closing years of Mr. Blest's life will occupy a separate chapter in this memoir.

CHAPTER X.

HIS REMOVAL TO DUBLIN—ITS DISADVANTAGES AT HIS
ADVANCED PERIOD OF LIFE—DEATH OF HIS SECOND
WIFE—HIS VIEWS ON POLITICAL SUBJECTS—INTERVIEWS
WITH MR. WALKER—HIS DECLINING HEALTH AND
DISSOLUTION.

THE widely-extended operations of the London Hibernian Society, in the year 1827, rendered it necessary that its accredited agent should be no longer located in a provincial town; and the Parent Committee, in London, came to the resolution of transferring the office to Dublin. At any former period of his life, Mr. Blest would have objected strongly against such an arrangement from considerations of a personal nature; but now the inroads of death in his family, and his second marriage, productive of new associations, rendered it less irksome to his mind. It was, however, with intense feelings of regret that he bade farewell to the place of his nativity, and the scene of his Christian exertions, with a melancholy foreboding, which the event realized, that he would never revisit it. He thus writes to the Rev.

Thomas Webster, in the first official communication, after his removal to Dublin :—

“I left Sligo with feelings of considerable anxiety, mitigated alone by the consideration that I am employed in the work of Him, who is God of the whole earth, and trusting in his consolatory encouragement—‘Fear not for I am with thee—be not dismayed, for I am thy God.’ The cause is his; he has guided and prospered its arrangements and operations from the beginning, to the present day; nor will he change with change of place. I look to him for guidance and support.”

In many points of view, his removal to Dublin, at his advanced period of life, was prejudicial to his happiness, which would not have been the case if it had occurred when he first became officially connected with the London Hibernian Society. He would have been then surrounded by his family, and associated with many religious friends, whom he had known in early life, and who were now no more. He occupied an isolated position, even amidst the bustle of official business, and the concentrated exertion of Christian zeal, which the Irish metropolis would have presented to the sympathy of a more youthful

mind. Connaught had been the arena of many a hard-fought battle, in the early warfare of the society, against the spiritual darkness of the native Irish; and whilst in Sligo he was on the spot to receive the almost daily visits of individuals to whom the perusal of the Bible, and the labours of Irish readers, had opened a field of serious inquiry, respecting matters connected with their eternal salvation. Some approached him like Nicodemus, with minds partially enlightened, but not as yet divested of fear; and others in hypocritical pretence. His discrimination of character, however, enabled him almost in every instance to discover their real motives; and he either strengthened the weak resolutions of the former, or reproved the dissimulation of the latter, which often led to the most happy results. This afforded him much useful and interesting occupation, which he viewed as a relaxation from the overwhelming duties of his office; but of which he was deprived when he left Sligo.

In addition to these unfavourable circumstances, he had not been many months in Dublin when he again became a widower. Mrs. Blest was attacked with an illness which speedily proved fatal. Their union was of short dura-

tion, only a year having elapsed since their marriage. The afflictive visitation was so unexpected, that at the time he suffered much anguish of mind, and never afterwards recovered fully his former vivacity of spirits. All these matters connected with the increasing infirmities of old age, cast a sorrowful solemnity of feeling over his latter days on earth, and impressed more deeply on his mind the reality of his coming dissolution. But although those clouds darkened the evening of his life, they were illumined by the light of that world to which he was fast approaching. The star of his hope shone brightly, and directed the eyes of his understanding to that "Holiest of all" in the heavens, into which Jesus as his Intercessor had entered.

His residence in Dublin afforded him, on the other hand, more frequent opportunities of meeting and conversing with the clergy of the Established Church, who were patrons of the society's schools, and of hearing from them that the work of the Lord was prospering in their hands. Many of them have since gratefully acknowledged, that the valuable observations which his matured experience enabled him to make, were highly useful in the regulation of

their ministerial conduct, under particular circumstances. He felt deeply interested in the welfare of the Church of Ireland, viewing, as already remarked in this memoir, the full development of her principles, in contradistinction to the Romish system, as the means of national evangelization. Although, from the peculiar circumstances of the times, he had long co-operated with dissenters, he never, for a moment, entertained the Utopian plan of substituting the desultory labours of missionaries for the uniform system of parochial pastorship; nor could his sober judgment realize the phoenix of a more scriptural reformation, arising from the ashes of the national church. His heart's desire, and prayer to God, in her behalf, was that the Gospel, in all its fulness and freeness, might be faithfully proclaimed from every pulpit; and he watched with much jealousy the workings of that innovating spirit, which sought to curtail her increasing efficiency during some years subsequent to the passing of the Reform Bill in parliament. With respect to the coalition which was then formed by the enemies of the church for her destruction, he thus expresses himself:—

“If dissenters continue their acquiescence

in popish measures, they will themselves be included in the destruction meditated against the Established Church. Were the dissenters in England to make a common stand with their episcopalian brethren, not for to stop necessary reform, but to stem the torrent of popish aggression, no ministry, holding the reins of government would dare to act as the dupes of political agitators, whose design is the annihilation of Protestantism, particularly in Ireland. Such a calamity might be averted by the union of Protestants of all denominations against the common enemy. If the attachment of dissenters to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England be not sufficiently strong to engage their exertions to oppose the extinction of the Establishment, and to prevent the advance of popery, believe me their religion is far from being genuine; and depend upon it, if dissenters come not forward at this crisis, they will manifest a spirit contrary to enlightened zeal for the real cause of Christ, and they will be visited for their conduct. If through their instrumentality, however unintentional, popery be established, then they will feel the effects of such a procedure; and they will feel them *deservedly*. Now they meet with no persecu-

tion from the Established Church, and they ill appreciate this privilege. With respect to the success of the Gospel, it is mainly through the instrumentality of the excellent ministers of the Irish Church, it is accomplished, and from them dissenters meet with every legitimate co-operation, which they seem (*at least they say so*) to appreciate; and yet that they should be accessory to the establishment of popery is a grievous thing."

In a letter to the Rev. Thomas Webster, dated April 5, 1834, he makes the following observations on the same subject:—

"I have with considerable pain perceived in the parliamentary intelligence the overt acts of what I can only regard as a strong delusion. The dissenters are seeking to remove that barrier which, under God, has happily, until the late political concessions, prevented popery from overflowing the land, and sweeping away every vestige of Protestantism in Ireland. May God open their eyes! That radicals, Socinians, deists, and papists, should act in this way is not to be wondered at; but if it be the case that any professing evangelical sentiments have

joined in the unholy league, their conduct will most assuredly entail on them deserved punishment. I am no prophet, but I clearly foresaw all the sad effects of the late political changes, which have followed in quick succession. However all will ultimately be well.—‘The Lord reigneth.’

“With respect to the effects of this political mania on the interests of our society, Mr. Carlile’s sophistry has done much to deceive the religious dissenters in England on this subject. But the delusion will not be lasting—I cannot at present enlarge.

“I sincerely thank you for your application of the Prophet Daniel’s dismissal (xii. 9–13) to my case. The period cannot be far distant when I, as a monument of the riches of that grace which reigns through righteousness, shall stand up in my lot. Oh! what a lot of love! incorporated into the church of the first-born! Into this church I was introduced, by Him who saves the lost, when I first felt the heavenly attraction which is always connected with a view of Him who was lifted up. And, oh! what a society! (Heb. xii. 22–24.) From that society my heart was never since alienated, and through his power never will. There, my dear friend,

we shall meet, and, oh! what a mercy! to be ever with the Lord.

“Yours, my dear sir, with grateful affection,

“ALBERT BLEST.”

The sentiments expressed in these letters were held in common by the vast majority of individuals with whom Mr. Blest was associated. They did not permit political antipathies to intermingle with their religious opinions. Thankful for the privileges they enjoyed, they were not “given to change:” their desire was, “to lead peaceable and quiet lives,” unless when their loyalty demanded their active exertions for the preservation of the constitution. And it is but justice to state, that in any course of conduct which they felt it their duty to pursue, the glory of God, and not the “shibboleth” of a party, was their guiding principle. It would be well if the present generation were actuated by similar motives.

In the concluding paragraph of the foregoing communication, written when Mr. Blest had entered his eightieth year, we have a striking illustration of that inspired declaration, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth

more and more unto the perfect day." His religion had not consisted in merely theoretical views of divine truth, but in personal communion with God. He knew him in whom he had believed; and he spoke of eternal things, not in the spirit of unholy presumption, but implicit confidence in the faithfulness of God. He had almost reached the confines of his earthly pilgrimage, and, hitherto "preserved in Jesus Christ," he felt assured that he would be "kept through faith unto salvation," until put in possession of the promised "inheritance of the saints in light."

During a temporary illness which Mr. Blest had in 1833, his old friend Mr. Walker paid him a visit, the particulars of which interview he afterwards communicated to William Hall, Esq., of Cheltenham, in the following extract:

"You have heard, I presume, that Mr. Walker has returned to Dublin; and although he has been here nearly six months, I have only seen him once, and when I was in a very low state. The motive for his visit was an anxiety to declare to me the Gospel before I would go hence, and be no more seen. I felt thankful, but as he forbade my speaking

a word, being much oppressed at the time with a difficulty of respiration, I contented myself with assuring him, that for the past half century I was fully convinced that Christ was, indeed, the only foundation; and that I also coincided in opinion with the sentiment which he seemed most anxious to inculcate—that if, at the present moment, I were convinced of my former profession being delusive, the Saviour remained able to save to the uttermost, and had pledged himself never to cast out any who fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the record of his character, irrespective of their former state. He has not since called, and I regret to hear that he suffers much from indisposition. My prayer for him and those in his connexion is, that they may be mercifully saved from their delusions, which I fear are awfully on the increase.”

Mr. Walker had resided for many years in London. In his published correspondence there are several letters written during that period to his Irish friends, which prove the painful interest he took in the dissensions which occurred in the religious party of which he had been the ostensible leader. He at length

retraced his steps to Dublin, in a very delicate state of health; and the Board of Trinity College, after a long neglect of his literary merits, settled an annuity on him, which he did not long enjoy, as he died within the current year, on the 25th October, 1833. However pure and disinterested had been his motives in dissenting from the Established Church, it is much to be regretted that, after having given the first impulse to spiritual zeal in the ministry of the national sanctuary, and promoted a return to the doctrinal principles of the Reformation within her pale, he should have voluntarily withdrawn from that sphere of usefulness in which Providence had evidently placed him; but holding the opinions which he entertained during his continuance in her communion, the step which he ultimately took is not to be wondered at. Mr. Blest thus alludes to the matter, in a letter to the Rev. Henry Maturin, of Fanet, dated May 31, 1817:—

“Blessed be God that you have been preserved in the hour of that temptation, which visited the professed servants of the Lord in this kingdom, and shook some who were esteemed pillars to the base. Oh! for the happy

restoration of those with whom you once took such sweet counsel, and over whose defection you have, no doubt, long mourned. May they repent, and do their first works, and once more burn with devoted zeal to promote the glory of the Saviour, in the conversion of sinners, which so signally marked the joy of their spiritual espousals, and their early labours in the ministry. You know my affection for the leader of this unhappy schism ; and if deference for the judgment of mortals could have induced me to adopt sentiments without due investigation, my admiration of him would have enrolled me among his first followers ; but I have reason for much thankfulness, that at the first glance I perceived the system he advanced to be erroneous, and foresaw many of the awful consequences which have unhappily followed. How far are God's thoughts above our thoughts. When Mr. Walker withdrew from the Established Church, I looked on all that was done in conveying the leaven of divine truth into the college and the Church, as blasted for ever ; but our Lord has shown that he has the residue of the spirit, by raising up a host of faithful witnesses, and spreading the knowledge of his truth in every direction, with a large measure

of *love*—the antidote against the fatal poison of the new System. No doubt, my dear sir, your bones (to use a scriptural expression) flourish like an herb on beholding what the Lord is doing in fertilizing the waste places of your Zion, and visiting all the dark parts of this long desolate heritage, with the light of his Gospel.”

Some time after the interview mentioned by Mr. Blest in his letter to Mr. Hall, of Cheltenham, he waited upon Mr. Walker, but the latter, having, according to his religious sentiments, discharged his duty by communicating to him his views of the Gospel, felt reluctant to have any farther intercourse with him. Mr. Blest perceiving that his visit was not well received, after a short time, withdrew; and, as he was about to retire, remarked—“When we meet again we may converse on some other subject.” Mr. Walker replied, “Any topic but religion.” “What then?” inquired Mr. Blest, in much astonishment; and the answer he received was—“The theatre, if you please.” They, however, never met again. Nothing can manifest more clearly the unhappy tendency of the separatist system. The

interesting occasion might have afforded many topics of solemn consideration. Both had reached the ordinary bounds of human existence, and both were, doubtless, looking forward to a speedy and eternal separation from the things of time and sense. Under other circumstances, however they might have differed on many religious points, as aged travellers Zionward, their affectionate recognition would have been mutual; and almost within view of their everlasting home, they would have met as Christian brethren; and that such was not the case was deeply regretted by Mr. Blest. It is pleasing, however, to find Mr. Walker, when his mind was disentangled from the irritating peculiarities of his principles, thus expressing himself in a letter written a few months previous to his death:—

“After residing for the last twelve years in London, I now find myself likely to spend the remainder of my days in this my native land; and that under many infirmities, and that of old age, which *ipsa est morbus*, I am waiting in peaceful expectation of my change, and that of the coming glory.”

From the time Mr. Blest took up his resi-

dence in Dublin, he ceased to be a dissenter, at least as far as formal connexion with any of the metropolitan dissenting congregations would constitute him such. He generally attended public worship at the Bethesda, and the parish church of St. George's, and occasionally waited on the ministry of the Rev. W. H. Cooper, in Zion Chapel. He also frequently derived much pleasure in listening to the Rev. Thomas Kelly's expositions of the Scriptures. He had been in the habit for many years of corresponding with Mr. Kelly, and he was latterly one of the few surviving friends of his early life, and an individual for whose Christian character he entertained sentiments of the most affectionate respect. But he was often for months confined to his house. On one of these occasions he thus expresses himself, in a letter to a friend, dated March 26, 1833 :—

“My health has been so poorly for the last half year, that I thought it my duty to remain indoors, and for that period my communion has been exclusively confined to Jerusalem which is above, and my only instructors—Moses, the prophets, the apostles, and the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who teacheth to profit.

Yet I have been mercifully dealt with, I have not for a single week been prevented from attending, as fully as ever, to the great and important duties of my calling."

In a letter addressed to Captain John Banks, R.N., in May, 1834, Mr. Blest expresses his fears respecting the loss of his sight, with which he was shortly afterwards visited.

"I must apologise for this imperfectly-written letter, and confess that I feel apprehensive a failure of my sight will shortly oblige me to avail myself of the services of an amanuensis. The business of the office for the whole day, and the enjoyment of my only, and most precious recreation—reading, until I retire to rest, have imposed such labour on my assistant, that a diminution of their kind attention to myself personally, need not be wondered at, although most painful to your faithful and affectionate servant,

"ALBERT BLEST."

When labouring under this deprivation, he was visited by a Christian friend, and being

requested to write his name in her album, he dictated the following simple stanzas :—

Though darken'd eyes, refuse to aid
This feeble hand t' obey thy will,
My worthless name I here inscribe,
Thy kind injunction to fulfil.

I venture not, like Goshen's sage
Who did by inspiration bless,
And to the heads of Israel's tribes,
Their future destiny express.

But sure I may presume to ask
Of Israel's God, his richest grace,
To bless unto their latest day
My friends and their beloved race.

The period was now fast approaching, which was to terminate his indefatigable exertions in promoting the cause of scriptural education. Such, however, was still his vigour of mind, that he overcame obstacles which to another person similarly circumstanced would have been insurmountable. He had watched by the cradle of the London Hibernian Society, and under his unwearied superintendence, that institution had arrived at an extent of operation which included every county of Ireland; and the very idea of

surrendering his guardianship of its interests would have rendered him truly miserable. The parent committee in London fully appreciated his long and invaluable labours in their service, and felt unwilling to distress his mind by appointing a successor during his life-time. The matured experience of his highly-esteemed assistant secretary, Mr. Hanly, enabled him to fulfil the duties of his office until the day of his dissolution.* And it was a truly interesting sight to behold this venerable servant of God, though blind, and tottering on the verge of the grave, presiding over an educational society comprising 2,355 daily, Sunday, and

* In a letter to Captain J. Banks, R. N., as secretary to the London committee written March 31, 1835, Mr. Blest thus expresses himself:—

“Aware, as you are, of the great pressure from the multitude of business requiring the constant attention of my assistant, you will be prepared for my apology in not including details of the account. I am still mercifully borne up under a lingering indisposition. I think, however, though I am not sanguine in my expectation, nor indeed anxious about the result, that there is a prospect of increasing convalescence. But of this I am certain that the society’s business suffers no injury, knowing as I do the undivided attention and incessant labours of an assistant whose commendable zeal for the society’s interest has progressively increased for the last twenty-one years.”

adult schools, and 135,933 pupils. In compliance with the wishes of its early friends, and in a spirit of faith, he had, twenty-seven years previously, made the experiment of establishing a few schools in a mountainous district of the west of Ireland. And from this insignificant commencement had gradually arisen, under his fostering care, that system of scriptural education, which has proved so great a blessing to the peasantry of his beloved country. He was permitted to reap an abundant harvest, and it was his privilege to enter into the rest prepared for the people of God, with the consolatory assurance, that his undertaking had met with the divine approbation.

In the winter of 1835, he had a severe attack of influenza, which weakened him very much. He somewhat revived during the following spring ; but his health continued delicate for the remainder of that year. He was able, however, to sit in his drawing-room, and dictate replies to the communications received from all parts of Ireland, and to affix his signature by Mr. Hanly guiding his hand to the place, and holding it there until he had written his name. The returns of the quarterly examinations, furnished by the inspectors, were also read to him, and he

regulated in conjunction with his assistant, the averages of payment to each teacher separately.

At length, in January, 1837, the same disease again seized on his debilitated constitution. During his last illness he on one occasion expressed himself in the following language. "A few days ago my mind was opened to perceive more fully than heretofore the vanity of all earthly things. It is brought to rely implicitly on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the light of my countenance, the fulness of my joy, the foundation of my hope. He is to me 'the bread of life.' The bread which Moses received was carnal bread; it sustained the Jews in time, and only for a time; but Christ is the true living bread to satisfy the hungerings of an immortal spirit. What a blessing to dwell beneath the shadow of Jehovah! there is peace—there is security. As to this body of flesh, it must be taken down, and laid in the house appointed for all living. But Jesus has destroyed him who hath the power of death—even the devil. Blessed be his name."

On the 24th of January he was able to leave his bed, and entered into conversation with Mr. Hanly, respecting the great Protestant meeting to be held in the course of that day in the King's

room of the Mansion-house, Dublin. On the following day (Thursday the 25th) he was much worse, but expressed considerable interest in the speeches which were read to him from "the Evening Mail" of that date. He listened attentively for some time, and frequently expressed his satisfaction at the sentiments which were advanced by the persons who had addressed the crowded assemblage; but becoming fatigued, he requested to know the names of the speakers towards the conclusion of the meeting. Whilst the person who acted as reader was thus engaged, his son Albert, resident in Dublin, called to see him about four o'clock, p.m.; and after conversing with him for a short time, he thought from the drooping position of his head that he had suddenly fallen asleep; and on approaching the bed to arrange his pillow, he found, to his utter astonishment, that his spirit had forsaken its earthly tabernacle. The dread of a death-bed struggle had often caused him many gloomy forebodings, as to the solemn circumstances of his final dismissal. He had frequently sang, and repeated with much nervousness of feeling, the following stanza of a favourite hymn;—

"When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside,
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee."

He was mercifully preserved from a realization of his fears, as his transition from time to eternity was almost instantaneous; and, as far as human observation could perceive, he was scarcely conscious of it himself. He calmly fell asleep in Jesus, after a protracted life of devoted zeal.

The following honourable memorial was adopted by the parent committee at their next meeting:—

"Having, with unfeigned sorrow, heard of the death of the venerable and excellent secretary and agent for Ireland, Mr. Albert Blest—

"This committee are desirous of recording upon their minutes their deep sense of his long and valuable services; which, commencing almost with the operations of the London Hibernian Society in Ireland, have been continued, with unremitting zeal, and in the exercise of sound judgment and piety, until within a few hours

of that solemn event, when he was called to appear before his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ ; —services which, through the grace of God, have been highly creditable to his Christian character, have tended to raise this society in public estimation and usefulness, and proved a lasting benefit to the people of that country.

“It was his privilege, under Divine Providence, to introduce the society’s system of scriptural education into the sister island ; and that at a period when comparatively few cared for the souls of the people, and scarcely any efforts upon a large scale were in operation for their spiritual improvement.

“He lived to see other kindred institutions raised up for the promotion of the same blessed object, and to witness the operations of this society carried into every county of Ireland ; while he has been the medium of communicating a sound Bible education to upwards of six hundred thousand of his fellow-countrymen, and of circulating nearly four hundred thousand copies of that sacred volume which was so particularly precious to his own soul.

“He has now entered into his rest, and his works do follow him.”

Thus terminated the earthly existence of a

man, to whose memory Ireland owes a deep debt of gratitude, the amount of which the judgment-seat of Christ will alone disclose. From the moment his mind was brought fully under the influence of vital godliness, his constant aim was to be useful to the souls of his fellow-men. We have beheld him as a private Christian devoted to the service of God, and as the agent of the London Hibernian Society, we shall have a further opportunity of forming an estimate of his character in the succeeding section of this memoir.

CHAPTER XI.

LONDON HIBERNIAN SOCIETY.

PREFATORY REMARKS—ITS ORIGINAL PLAN—VISIT OF DEPUTATION TO IRELAND—EXTRACTS FROM THEIR REPORT—MR. BLEST'S FIRST CONNEXION WITH THE SOCIETY—ITS MISSIONARY LABOURS—IRISH INSTRUCTION—EXAMINATION OF ITS PRINCIPLES—BECOMES AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN 1814—DETAIL OF ITS SYSTEM OF INSPECTION AND INSTRUCTION—BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF ITS LABOURS, ETC.

AFTER the secession of Messrs. Walker and Kelly from the ministry of the Established Church, the peculiar views which each adopted, prevented mutual co-operation in any general plan of religious usefulness ; and during the two subsequent years, little exertion was made for the spiritual improvement of Ireland. A fierce warfare was carried on by opposing parties on the subject of church government, which was very inimical to the real interests of vital godliness.

The Church of Ireland awakening to a sense of her responsibility, had instituted in the year 1792, the " Association for Discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Knowledge and Practice

of the Christian Religion," which was incorporated by act of parliament in the year 1800. The principal means employed by this society were, the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, of Books of Common Prayer, and of moral and religious tracts; the extension of catechetical examinations, and the grant of premiums to the best answerers; the establishment of schools, and the grant of salaries and gratuities to schoolmasters. Such an educational society must have been productive of much good. But still, there was an extensive field demanding Christian culture left unoccupied, and it became an object of sympathy to the friends of religion in England.

In the year 1806, a few benevolent individuals resident in London, and unconnected with Ireland except by the ties of Christian affection and genuine philanthropy, were deeply impressed with a sense of her moral and spiritual destitution, and took into consideration the means which might be employed for the amelioration of her forlorn condition. In furtherance of this object they formed the "Hibernian Society for the diffusion of religious knowledge in Ireland." Their first plan of operation was of a three-fold character—ministerial and lay preaching, distribution of the word of God and tracts, and

the establishment and encouragement of schools. But for the first four years, the employment of itinerant preachers appears to have been principally attended to. In 1807, a deputation consisting of the Rev. Thomas Charles of Balla, Wales; the Rev. David Bogue of Gosport; the Rev. Joseph Hughes of Battersea; and their treasurer, Samuel Mills, Esq. of Finsbury-place, London, visited Ireland in order to obtain accurate information as to the state of religion in that country, and to consult with suitable persons respecting the best measures for carrying into effect the views of the society. After travelling through the four provinces, they published on their return to London, a very interesting report, which is well worthy of perusal, but the author regrets that it is too long for full insertion in this memoir. It enters into a minute detail of the state of religious parties in Ireland, and the communities principally noticed are, Roman Catholics, Protestant Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Methodists.

A long section of the report appropriated to Romanism, concludes with the following important observations :—

“ On the whole, popery appears to be exhi-

bited and inculcated there, (as it probably is in every country where it obtains footing,) with such a decided partiality in favour of its most fantastic and antichristian features—the manoeuvres of its priests are so various, so subtle, and, alas! so efficient—and the moral aspect, from these, and other causes, is so discouraging, that the deputation, confining themselves to this view of Ireland, see nothing but formidable barriers erected against every attempt to bless her inhabitants with the light of life: nor must it be concealed, that the numerical preponderance of Roman Catholics is itself a prolific seed of disunion, not to say, political disaffection. The hope, therefore, that the Irish will ever be a tranquil and loyal people, and still more, that piety and virtue will flourish among them, must be built on the anticipated reduction of popery! But how is this event to be accomplished? By penal laws, or impassioned factions? Religion, humanity, and common sense answer—No . . . A solicitude to redress all grievances, and a leaning to the extreme of generosity, seem to promise the happiest result, especially if connected with prudent and zealous efforts to unveil before the deluded votaries of Rome, Christianity in her own unsophisticated and majestic form.

“The Protestant episcopalians, that is, the members of the Established Church, amount, it is computed, to half a million. The clergy belonging to this community are placed in a very responsible and arduous situation. Much attention is requisite, amidst the seductive influences of the popish priesthood, in order to reclaim, preserve, encourage, and increase the flock. At the same time, to say nothing of their emoluments and literary advantages, the sanction they derive from the state, confers on the Protestant clergy an authority which is capable of being converted to the best account. It were well if they all entertained those views of the Gospel, cultivated those dispositions, and abounded in those labours, which the circumstances of Ireland so emphatically require. The churches are, for the most part, opened but once a day ; in a country where the most pernicious errors prevail, this appears to be a mortifying deficiency. Yet such is the far-spread apathy, even in populous towns, that, if there are two services, the attendance on the second is deplorably thin. This surely could not be the case, were the minds of the people, during the first service, more generally affected by the impressive truths which some have the privilege

to hear. The deputation were in company with several clergymen, who both dispense and adorn the doctrines of the Gospel. Should it please the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth many additional labourers, endowed like these, Ireland would soon have reason to rejoice; for though few converts, if any, from the popish church, have been made by these clergymen, the precious seed of truth, scattered from their hands among nominal Protestants, has produced some correspondent fruit. It is most devoutly to be wished, that those who induct into the sacred office, and those who are inducted, may indeed be moved by the Holy Ghost; then will the shepherds 'feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly—not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind—neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' If the Established Church of Ireland is to be supported with effect, the people must see their ministers; their ministers must emulate the diligence of the Roman Catholic priests—they must be more exemplary than they. They must faithfully preach the word both in public and from house to house; in a word, they must be such, in their doctrine and manner of life, as bigots, formalists, and

hirelings, whether Popish or Protestant, assail, yet fear—disdain, yet envy—calumniate, yet inwardly applaud.

“It was stated to the deputation, that several *curacies* could be obtained, if such ministers were to offer. Cannot England spare a few of her young evangelists? Would not a few be willing to cross the channel at their brethren’s invitation? But how much more important to provide apostolic men with *benefices*! Let the friends of Zion bear it on their minds, when they enjoy communion with Him who has all hearts in his hands, and can, therefore, persuade the wealthy and the noble to employ their patronage for the advancement of his spiritual kingdom.

“The Presbyterians, as it respects both their number and the date of their settlement in Ireland, approach nearer to the Established Church than the communities yet to be described. In point of number, they are almost equal. They have upwards of one hundred and sixty congregations, a few of these are south of Dublin, but by far the greater part are in the north. Some are exceedingly reduced, so that were it not for the allowance of government, they would inevitably be dissolved. It is submitted, whether this is not occasioned by a departure from the essential

articles of the Christian faith, and by a failure of ardent piety ; and it is also submitted, but with deference and the most entire good will, whether the clear representation of those essential articles, and the practical display of that ardent piety, account, on the general scale, for the advantageous exterior of the more numerous congregations.

“ *Seceders* may be considered as constituting a second class of *Presbyterians*. Hitherto, they have been divided, as in Great Britain, into burghers and anti-burghers ; but, the ground of separation having no existence in Ireland, they are now in progress towards a union They have about ninety congregations, and are supposed to be uniformly tenacious of evangelical truth.

“ Should the *Presbyterians*, viewed comprehensively, acquire a more animated tone, and a more popular manner, feeling, at the same time, the importance of uniting with other denominations in plans for propagating the Gospel, their own interests, and the interests of Protestants at large, would, humanly speaking, soon burst the comparatively narrow boundaries which at present confine them.

“ The *Methodists*, that is, the members of Mr. Wesley’s connexion, have been embodied in

"Ireland contains five or six congregations of Baptists; but they seem to be in the last stage of decline.

"Several religious societies have lately been constituted, adopting in general the maxims, and assuming the name, of *Independents*. Those in the south are, more or less, connected with the Rev. Mr. Kelly.

"The *Independents* in the north are more numerous; they have been considerably assisted by a zealous benefactor resident in Scotland. The strain of preaching in this denomination is decidedly evangelical; they are active in the promotion of Sunday-schools, in the management of which they excel, and they manifest a laudable concern to spread the Gospel through all parts. They practise weekly communion, and in some of their churches the administration of the Lord's Supper is not restricted to the ministerial office. If weekly communion does not tend to produce this singularity, it is, at least, obvious that ordination and a right to administer the Lord's Supper are thus virtually pronounced separable from each other, it being highly improbable that the pastor's place, when he is absent, will always be filled by a minister who has received ordination. Without entering into the discussion, it may not be unsuitable to

remind the members of this community, that their reasonings on such topics, from apostolic usage, and even command, often prove too much, that they are in danger of exhausting on definitions and the frame of a Christian church the energy which should be reserved for the advancement of its spiritual character, and that they induce a fear lest they should gradually assimilate themselves still more to the advocates of the system known by the name of *marked separation*.

“The advocates of marked separation, as far as the deputation could learn, not only refuse to pray in a room with persons supposed to be unconverted, but, except as it regards those who go throughout with their system, decline all social worship with persons of whose piety they profess not to harbour a doubt. According to their views, it would be disorderly, or, rather, criminal, to mingle in the supplication of any family, or of any church, in Great Britain—no family, no church, over its whole extent, being as yet illuminated by the reflection of *their rays*. How they reconcile this with holding public assemblies for divine service may not easily be determined. Their number, as might be expected, is small, and their origin is so recent,

that they can scarcely be considered as having anticipated the final extent of their repulsive peculiarities. It is not denied that the pious and the amiable are found in their contracted circle ; but when the former habits of such are compared, in point of utility, with their present, the degeneracy is palpable and afflictive. The broaching of their system in Ireland, a country where, if in any other, the union of Christians should be carried, with a holy vehemence, to its last lawful limit, is calculated to do unspeakable mischief. Should it be suffered by Divine Providence to flow in a more copious stream, the eager propagators of Christianity will feel themselves proportionally thwarted in their noblest endeavours. Papists will declaim with renewed advantage on the divisions of Protestants, and the sons of infidelity and vice will approach the majesty of pure and undefiled religion with augmented violence and scorn.

' Hoc Ithacus velit, et magno mercentur Atridæ.'

The author feels assured that no apology will be considered necessary for these copious extracts. The report from which they are selected was the production of individuals of different religious denominations, and the senti-

ments which they express indicate a total absence of sectarian feeling. They viewed the Romish system as destructive to the immortal interests of their fellow-men, and its extinction was the object of their prayers and exertions. But they did not visit Ireland for the purpose of interfering with the internal arrangements of any existing Protestant community. They aimed not at the undue exaltation of any particular religious party. "To do good unto all men," was their motto, and their subsequent proceedings fully verified their strict adherence to it. The spirit of Christian liberality by which they were actuated, also justified the expectation, that they would adopt whatever plan would be deemed, after careful deliberation, most suitable for the accomplishment of their benevolent designs.

During the sojourn of this deputation in Dublin, they were invited to dinner by Alderman Hutton, a well-known religious character of that day. Commercial business brought Mr. Blest to the Irish metropolis at the same time, and casually meeting with the pious alderman, who was an old and intimate friend, he complied with his request to meet these English gentlemen. In the course of the evening a discussion took place on a religious subject, and the ability

displayed by Mr. Blest, in maintaining his view of the matter, produced a very favourable impression on the minds of the deputation. One of them, who had been merely a listener, at length exclaimed, "Gentlemen, we are come to convert the Irish, and here is an individual from Connaught, better instructed than we are!"

In the year 1809, Mr. Mills, a member of this deputation, again visited Dublin. The object of this second mission was, to secure the co-operation of influential persons, especially in Dublin, in behalf of the Hibernian Society. The London Committee felt at a loss how to act, when, unassisted by persons possessing local information, who would prevent their exertions being directed to the prosecution of unsuitable plans of usefulness. After an almost fruitless attempt, Mr. Mills, on hearing that Mr. Blest happened also to be then in that city, waited upon him at his lodgings, stated to him how matters stood, and earnestly requested that he would endeavour to further the objects of the society in the province of Connaught. During the interval that had elapsed since their former interview at Alderman Hutton's house, Mr. Blest, though highly approving of the benevolent intentions of the society, was too much

occupied with his private concerns, to render any friendly assistance. An unexpected depression in the ~~linen~~ business, in which he was extensively engaged, had caused much anxiety of mind, as to its more than probable effect upon his capital embarked in it. The kind interference of the Rev. Thomas Kelly relieved him from any temporary embarrassment which might otherwise have arisen, and left him at liberty to engage in the promotion of a cause in the success of which his feelings had been so long enlisted—the spiritual welfare of Ireland. He entered at once into Mr. Mills' views, and returned home fully determined to act upon them. A mutual correspondence commenced between them which was uninterruptedly carried on for many years. In a letter to Mr. Mills in 1825, Mr. Blest makes the following reflections on the circumstances and results of their first interview :—

“ In writing to you, my dear sir, it ill becomes me at any time to confine myself to the business in hand. I owe you a debt of gratitude which I can never repay, but which I trust I shall never forget. May my children also ever regard their kind benefactor with feelings of

affectionate and grateful respect ! Andrew I trust is doing well. John I hear still resides in Peru, having been hitherto prevented leaving it, as he had intended, deterred by the difficulty of removing from La Paz, in consequence of the disturbed state of the country. William is at present practising in St. Jago, and Anthony, from whom I had a letter four months ago, ———in India. All these are indebted to you very much for the facilities they now possess of passing through life in respectable situations. How important apparently accidental circumstances prove ! My introduction to you at Alderman Hutton's, seventeen years ago, seemed then unimportant and casual, and yet it is connected, with not only the introduction of my sons into life, but the rich flow of a tide of mercy into this kingdom, which has in its progress, proved the waters of life to hundreds, and still rolls on, conveying blessings to every part of the kingdom, carrying before it in its heaven-destined course, every mound opposed to its progress by earth and hell. I trust you attend—regularly attend the meetings of the committee. If ever the history of the London Hibernian Society be given to the world, your letters to me, more than your liberal donations, will prove how

much it is indebted to your laborious and unmerited attention for so many years. May you be long spared to watch over its interests, and rejoice in its success."

Mr. Mills well deserved this warm-hearted expression of grateful feeling on the part of the writer. As a personal friend, he acted towards Mr. Blest with the most disinterested generosity and indefatigable exertion to advance his four sons, whose names are mentioned, in their mercantile and professional pursuits. It is also due to Mrs. Puget of London, and to the memory of the late Robert Steven, Esq., to state that they in common with all the members of the committee, manifested the most friendly interest in the temporal welfare of his family. Thus whilst his time and thoughts were exclusively occupied in superintending the affairs of this society, four of his sons were amply provided for through the instrumentality of its friends. To Mr. Mills, he writes on another occasion :

"I can say without affectation, that the Searcher of hearts knows what I am utterly at a loss to express, the deep sense I entertain of your uncommon kindness to me, and your attention

on every opportunity to every branch of my family."

Mr. Mills continued for fourteen years as treasurer of the London Hibernian Society, and when he resigned that office, he placed the munificent sum of one thousand pounds at the disposal of the committee, in addition to his previous donations, and still continued a subscriber to its funds. Whilst the London Hibernian Society continues in existence, or its labours on record, the honoured name of SAMUEL MILLS will be had in lasting remembrance, as the sincere friend of Ireland.

When the Lord purposes to confer temporal or spiritual blessings upon a nation, or any portion of it, he raises up suitable instruments to accomplish his gracious designs ; and, in the present instance, when we consider the important services, in an educational way, which the London Hibernian Society has conferred for the last thirty years upon Ireland, it surely will not be viewed as presumptuous to contemplate the selection of the persons originally employed in the work, as directed and overruled by Him, who hath the hearts of all men in his hands, and at his disposal. Here we have presented

to us—Mr. Mills, a wealthy merchant, of London, who neither selfishly absorbed in the accumulation of property, nor squandering his leisure moments in luxurious retirement, but, as a true Christian patriot, devoting all his energies to promote the scriptural instruction of a people; and Mr. Blest, residing in a mountainous and secluded district of Connaught, an individual of stern principles and firm resolution, possessing as prominent traits of character, caution amounting to suspicion, and perseverance in the path of duty, from which neither temptation nor opposition ever caused him to swerve. He had at that period passed the meridian of life, and his long experimental knowledge of his own heart, as viewed in the mirror of revelation, and his keen and discriminating investigation of the conduct of others, according to the requirements of the divine law, caused him to have as accurate an acquaintance, as perhaps a finite mortal could attain, of “what was in man.” Having a mind also divested of bigotry, his plans of operation would be regulated for general good, and not sectarian advantage. Mr. Mills acted as the organ of communication between the Parent Committee, in London, and Mr. Blest, the

indefatigable agent in Ireland. These were the two men appointed to watch over the infancy of the London Hibernian Society; and under their fostering care it advanced to maturity.

But before we proceed to that period, when the Hibernian Society assumed an educational form exclusively, it will be interesting for us to take a short review of its early operations while they were of a comprehensive character.

The Reverend George Hamilton, seceding minister of Armagh, who had been an active agent of the Ulster Evangelical Society, entered warmly into the management of the Hibernian Society's preaching department; and the following persons were appointed at his recommendation, and placed under his direction: Mr. Wm. Hastings, who preached in the district of the country surrounding Lough Neagh, and comprehending part of the counties of Tyrone, Londonderry, Antrim, and Armagh; his brother, Alexander Hastings, who had the town and county of Monaghan assigned to him, and Mr. Robert Smith, who itinerated through the northern part of Leinster.

The committee also employed Mr. Daniel Cook, who travelled as a preacher through the counties of Roscommon, Leitrim, and Monaghan,

and Mr. George Miller, who itinerated in the county of Down for three months during 1807.

In the year 1810, five hundred pounds were granted to York-street chapel, Dublin, towards the completion of that building, which had been erected by the exertions principally of Alderman Hutton. A writer signing himself T.K., whose letters appeared some years ago in the *Dublin Record* newspaper, thus speaks on the subject :

“A religious meeting continued for some years in Alderman Hutton’s ; and I trust I am not overrating its value too much when I speak of it as connected with some interesting results. During its continuance, I believe it was blessed and owned of God, in the conversion of sinners ; and I believe also I am quite correct, when I say, that the large building in York-street, where the Gospel is statedly preached, and where an independent church has been formed, owes its origin to the meeting in Alderman Hutton’s. On Tuesday, the day on which the meeting was held in each week, the alderman used frequently to ask a few friends, who he knew were interested about the work of God, to dine with him. On such occasions the question, from time to time, was introduced.

Whether it would not be practicable to raise money for building a house wherein the Gospel would be steadily preached, and which would be opened to ministers of various denominations from England and Scotland, occasionally visiting Dublin? The question led to action—a piece of ground was obtained; and chiefly, I believe, by the zeal and liberality of Alderman Hutton, the house was sufficiently finished to admit to be opened for worship. The person who opened the house was Rowland Hill—a singular person indeed—one who in zeal, disinterestedness, and devotedness, I believe I may add, in usefulness, has been surpassed by few.”

In the year 1811, the committee granted to Cook-street chapel, Cork, the sum of three hundred pounds towards the liquidation of an outstanding debt due on that independent place of worship, and had the premises vested in suitable trustees. The committee also recommended Mr. Fleming, of Liverpool, who was at that time disengaged, to officiate as the minister of it.

Subsequently the committee purchased the Independent Chapel of Sligo, and had the property also transferred by a similar legal document.

The committee also appointed Mr. Thomas Gordon to preach in Youghal and the surrounding neighbourhood, and availed themselves of the services of Mr. Creighton, some time a missionary at Monte Video, in South America, and who had been obliged to return home in consequence of its evacuation by the British army. Messrs. Gordon and Creighton had been students in the Rev. David Bogue's theological academy, Gosport.

The committee states in the report for 1808, that it "assisted poor but faithful ministers in Ireland to extend their labours around their own neighbourhood."

A few daily and Sabbath schools were established. In the same report, a letter is inserted from Mr. James Buchanan, of Omagh, announcing to the committee that he had been instrumental in opening a school near his own residence, at which two hundred and eighty-five children, of various denominations, were in daily attendance; and in that neighbourhood another school, containing fifty pupils; and that he was also receiving applications from different quarters for the same purpose.

The attention of the committee was likewise,

at a very early period, directed to the object of ascertaining the affinity between the Irish and Gaelic languages, and how far Gaelic Bibles, and Gaelic preachers, could be understood by those who only understood the Irish language.—Report, 1809. In connexion with this subject we have the following pertinent remarks, in the annual report for 1810 :—

“That the far greater part of the Irish peasantry are in a state of gross ignorance, subject to the most dreadful delusions, and exposed to the attempts of designing men, who endeavour to infuriate their passions, is asserted by almost every writer who has noticed the condition of the labouring classes in Ireland. That a people, whose character is marked by many valuable qualities, should have continued so long in ignorance, with all these its baneful but natural consequences, must be imputed to their not having had suitable opportunities of receiving instruction.

“The attempts hitherto made to ameliorate their moral and religious habits have been confined within the use of the English language. The principal, and almost the only exception, is furnished by the Hon. Robert Boyle, from the

year 1684 to 1712, under whose patronage the Scriptures were printed in the Irish language, both in the Saxon and Roman character ; and the Book of Common Prayer, the public offices in which were enjoined, by the eighth and sixty-fourth canons of the Irish Convocation, to be read in those parishes where most of the people were Irish.

“The attachment of all nations to their vernacular tongue is well known, especially when that tongue is connected with the early national history, and with the most venerated antiquity. The use of such a primitive and favourite dialect, associates itself with some of the strongest affections of the human breast.

“The success which has attended the dispersion of the Scriptures, and the instruction of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the British in the principality of Wales, and the Manks in the Isle of Man, in the primitive dialects of those countries, furnish a powerful argument that it is highly disadvantageous to withhold from the Irish, and from the Irish only, similar means, and equal opportunities. The experience also of three centuries, through which ignorance has been too often made subservient to rebellion, forcibly

appeals to Christians of reflecting minds, as an excitement to promote the moral and religious improvement of the native Irish, by the employment of this most powerful and pleasing instrument.

“Let us consider the situation of well-disposed Irish parents having a numerous family. They are desirous ~~that~~ their children should become acquainted with the precepts and duties of religion. Where can they obtain this benefit? At the parish church? Alas! all they can hear there is in a foreign language. But if they resort to the mass-house, their children can be taught orally the Roman Catholic summary of doctrine, and occasionally hear a sermon, in their own language. Under these circumstances, is it surprising that the Roman Catholics increase? or is it not more surprising that any should be found among the lower orders who are not Roman Catholics?

“Is it not the direct and imperious duty of Christians, to provide the means of instruction for those who are entirely ignorant—for those, whose attachment to their vernacular tongue, operates as an obstacle to their receiving the light of revelation—and for those, who, though they may understand a few English terms, barely sufficient to enable them to barter their produce,

yet are susceptible of no extended information, except in their beloved Irish ?

“ Under this impression, the committee have pursued the inquiries noticed in their former reports ; and having received from various parts of Ireland, and from persons of mature judgment, the strongest encouragement to provide an elementary book for those, who might be desirous of being taught in their native tongue, they have adopted the resolution of printing a spelling-book in the Irish language.

“ For the composition of so useful and important a work, the society is indebted to the Rev. Dr. Neilson, a gentleman, whose reputation as a philologist and an antiquary, stands deservedly high. He has not only undertaken and executed this task with promptitude and ability, and with a zeal worthy of the object, but has declined all remuneration for his valuable services, rejoicing in the satisfaction of this benevolent service to his country.

“ Upon receiving the manuscript, the committee directed five thousand copies to be printed, and have since been corresponding with persons in Ireland, for the purpose of circulating them by sale or gratuitous distribution.

“ A stereotype edition of the New Testament in Irish is in progress, by the British and

Foreign Bible Society ; and of this the committee propose to avail themselves when completed. It is hoped that the spelling-book will, in the meantime, confer the ability, and prepare the way for reading the Scriptures ; and, that from these means, under the divine blessing, light will break forth on many who now sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Thus we perceive at this early period, the attention of the committee directed towards the instruction of the native Irish in their vernacular language ; and in their prosecution of that department of their work, circulating schools were established, the first teachers of which were drafted from a preparatory school established by Mr. Blest, near his own residence, at Greenville, under the care of Mr. Thaddeus O'Connellan.

Previous reference, however, ought to be made to a plan of operation which the committee had adopted in procuring three individuals, natives of the Highlands of Scotland, as missionaries for Ireland. From the supposed affinity between the Gaelic and Irish languages, it was confidently expected that their labours would have been eminently successful. But as far as these persons were concerned the result

was not productive of much good. One of them returned home after a short sojourn in Ireland. Another became what was termed a separatist Baptist, and though, for a time, employed as an inspector, his peculiar views rendered him unsuitable for the office which he filled, and the committee were at length obliged to dispense with his services. The third continued in the service of the society until his death, and it was only within a short period of his dissolution that he had acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Irish language to converse with any degree of fluency in it. However close may be the affinity of construction between the Gaelic and Irish languages, yet the dialects of both are so dissimilar, as almost to render them quite distinct. A striking instance of this occurred during a tour which the Rev. Christopher Anderson, of Edinburgh, made through Ireland. In the course of it, he visited Mr. Blest, at Greenville, and preached in Gaelic. After the sermon was concluded, Mr. Blest made particular inquiry among the Irish-speaking portion of the congregation, as to the extent to which Mr. Anderson's address was understood by them, and was assured that though they could interpret the meaning of a solitary word occasionally, yet a consecutive

perception was out of the question. Mr. Blest often alluded to the subject afterwards, and remarked, that Mr. Anderson had been persuaded to the contrary by an enthusiastic person who accompanied him to Sligo. This is a point, however, on which there has been much diversity of opinion. At all events, all parties will coincide in sentiment that duly qualified natives are best suited for such an important work, and to accomplish this object was the anxious desire of the London committee. The following letter, dated September 11th, 1811, was addressed by Mr. Mills, of London, to Mr. Blest :—

“Dear Sir—Your valuable and important favour of the 26th ultimo, came duly to hand, and in time for the meeting of the committee ; and by your not sending your monthly letter later than the last Tuesday in the month, it will, I hope, always arrive in time for our meeting.

“The ardent zeal you manifest, from time to time, for the objects of the society, excite the most cordial expressions of congratulation in the committee, and gratitude to the Giver of every good, and every perfect gift, for opening

a door, that they trust will be effectual, under the divine blessing, for extending the means of information, and therewith the knowledge of divine truth; and the committee rejoice that as you approve of the plan of associating persons of a kindred spirit, you will make such use of individuals, who may be disposed to engage in this labour of love, for the benefit of their countrymen. And they trust your intended excursion will be productive of establishing schools in the neighbouring counties, as you suggest.

“ As you mention there are among Connellan’s scholars some fully prepared to assist in teaching, the committee, taking into consideration, and aware of the value, and acceptability of such teachers over Englishmen and Scotchmen, and also that they will be much wanted as the schools increase, have directed me to submit to your consideration their being *completely* qualified for masters; and as this, by the entire occupation of their time, would prevent their earning necessary support, the committee would pay for that purpose for a short period (say a year or so, where it might be necessary), as you may think proper, commencing with about four or six. They think many advantages would arise from this scheme.

“To Connellan, who would have some pupils of a class superior to children and illiterate persons; to the scholars, who would thereby have before them a most powerful stimulus to exertion, if, as a reward, or result of their extraordinary application and progress, the prospect of being qualified to be masters and teachers for the society, and at the expense of the society, either in whole or in part; to the schools, as an uniformity of method, principle, and design would prevail; to Ireland, by the increase of schools; and to the country gentlemen, whose prejudices would be consulted, as well as those of the lower classes, by foreigners not being so much employed.

“As you can best ascertain how much per annum would be necessary for the support of each person thus to be instructed, the committee request your services herein, persuaded you will enter fully into their views, which are not to support them, so as to elevate them above the situation they are to fill, but merely to enable them to give their whole time to suitable instruction.

“In the selection of scholars to be thus instructed, an opportunity would offer for preparing young men of a pious disposition, and particularly those, who, by reading the Scrip-

tures, were impressed with their value, and with habits thus obtained, their services might become invaluable.

“Your statement of the intermixture and retention of paganism with Popery, is not only consistent with historical records of Romish missionaries, but modern travellers, and the Protestant missionaries in the East fully confirm the fact; and I am persuaded no method will be so effectual, as enabling the people to read, whereby they will perceive from the Scriptures what the Gospel is. And what has always been an encouragement to my mind relative to Ireland, as contra-distinguished from many other countries, is, that there exists among the lower classes a curiosity and desire of knowledge, that, if rightly directed and with the divine blessing, will be sufficient to enable readers to judge for themselves, how far the Scriptures warrant and support the Romish ritual. Our duty is certainly to go forward, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

“It seems your opponents (I will not say your enemies) have placed you on a level with Wicliff. Your name associated with the Bible! Is not this encouragement? It is. But it is not reward. For this you must wait until the

resurrection of the just, when they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

To this communication Mr. Blest sent the following reply, on the 25th September, 1811.

" You may judge of the great satisfaction your favour of the 11th instant communicated, when I inform you that I had in a great degree anticipated the plan you propose respecting Connellan's pupils; and as it was my intention before I received your letter, to propose a similar plan for the approbation of the society, which, as I did not entertain a doubt of, we already began to act upon. Connellan proposed to me, that three of his pupils fully qualified, should immediately enter on a mission to the more distant schools, to teach the masters, such of the scholars, and any in the neighbourhood who might attend, in reading the Irish Testament; and had actually, before he mentioned it to me, provided them with new hats and clothes, shirts, &c., in order that they might make a respectable appearance. I was happy to see this disinterested zeal and attachment for the cause; but knowing the expense he had been at

to be considerable in his circumstances, and relying on the approbation of the society, I insisted on reimbursing the expenses of the equipment.

“ You cannot conceive how I was elated on seeing the three striplings thus fitted out, cheerfully undertaking their mission, each carrying with him twelve Irish Testaments, like David going to meet Goliath in the name of Jehovah, with a sling and a stone, as I entertained the joyful hope, that from our schools, the sons of the aliens would be raised to be husbandmen and vine-dressers, to convert this wilderness into the vineyard of the Lord. Indeed, so great was my satisfaction, that I felt regret that the period was so distant, when I could make the society sharers of my joy. One circumstance in this affair will not fail to excite your admiration, as the hand of the Lord so evidently appears in it. Their parents, all ignorant Roman Catholics, cheerfully consented ; and, notwithstanding the priest has since censured them from the altar, persevere in their desire that they should continue in the service of the society. The mother of one of them (a fine youth about seventeen) called on me a few hours since, telling me, with great simplicity and affection, that she fully confided

in me for the disposal of her child ; nor would she believe a report, industriously propagated here, which I have traced to a priest, that all the children instructed in the schools will be obliged to serve in the army. This falsehood need not surprise you, when I inform you that this same gentleman has lately burned a New Testament, and some of the spelling-books, he found in a house he visited.

“ As our missionaries set forward on their journey shortly after I wrote last, we appointed that they should return in a week, to give an account how they were received, and the prospect they had of usefulness. On the last Lord’s day but one, I had the pleasure of entertaining them, and of receiving their report. They were all in high spirits, had been every where well received, and had full employment, not only in the schools, but in the neighbourhood of each, that several adult persons, joyful to hear the Scriptures in their own language, and perceiving with what facility they were read by the young teachers, the eldest being not more than seventeen, were anxious to entertain them, and give them lodging for the purpose of being taught by them after school hours.

“ The effect of this mission in this neighbour-

hood, and on Connellan's school, has also been most pleasing. Some who had withdrawn their sons from the schools, are now willing they should return, expecting that they may be promoted as teachers ; and it has not a little stimulated Connellan's other pupils to increasing activity and application, from a desire to push on to the post of honour. A good many of them are already nearly equally qualified with those we have sent out, except in point of age. They are yet too young to be employed ; but as Connellan has bestowed much pains in making them well acquainted with the English grammar, and is giving such of them as he esteems possessed of good parts, a classical education, I have no doubt but in a few years, his school will produce many useful masters, well acquainted, at least, with the letter of the Scriptures ; which I find has this good effect, even where it does not make wise unto salvation, that it is not likely those so informed will ever become the dupes of Romish superstition.

“ From this institution I hope to see masters arise, well instructed in the Scriptures, possessed of general and useful information, a regular and uniform plan, with zeal and true affection to the cause.

“ I have now given you the substance of what I intended to communicate before I received your last letter ; and it is truly encouraging, that your letter proves that here we have been directed to the same object. This, and the present prospect, are pleasing intimations that the Fountain of wisdom condescends to direct a work, which I trust is pregnant with blessings to those yet unborn, leading in the course of experience, directly to that way which seems best calculated for the peculiar situation of this kingdom.

“ I may say, that though the question, *How to effect a general spread of Divine Truth in this kingdom?* has occupied my mind for *thirty* years ; until the formation of the London Hibernian Society, and my connexion with it, I was much in the dark on the subject. During that period, seeing no other way than by the labours of ministers, my attention was directed to promote that object. Long experience, however, convinced me, that the situation of Ireland required something else, as in this way I found many insuperable difficulties opposed—some of which are obvious. First, the difficulty of procuring suitable preachers ; second, the means of their support ; third, the impracticability of

their having any other field for their labours, but the great towns and their immediate vicinity ; fourth, the certainty of their not having, even in such situations, the attendance of more than a small proportion even of the Protestants, while they would not have the ear of the great body of the inhabitants of those places ; and fifth, the impossibility *in this way* of extending religious knowledge to the great mass of the inhabitants of the country parts of this kingdom, who to a certainty, without previous preparation, would be prevented by their prejudices from hearing, were there even sufficient preachers for the kingdom at large.

“ But blessed be God, He who has the government on his shoulders, has opened a way to obviate and remove all these difficulties. Our Lord and his apostles by means of the Scriptures will find access to the most distant corners of the land, and by the bright manifestation of the word of life remove prejudice, and destroy error ; for, as you justly observe, the lower classes of the Irish possess curiosity, and desire knowledge. This, if unrestrained, would secure the reading of the Scriptures, especially in the Irish, by all who can read ; but the schools at once break

through the restraints imposed on them, provide readers for the kingdom, and convert, in a sense, each reader into a preacher of the Gospel—and thus in a way that obviates the prejudices of the people, distributing the leaven through the whole mass.”

These two important and interesting letters give us a view of the early plans adopted by Mr. Blest, for promoting the objects of the London Hibernian Society in an educational way. They appear to have met with the full approbation of the committee, as Mr. Mills thus addressed Mr. Blest on the 10th of the following month :—

“Dear Sir—It will give you much pleasure to know that your several letters of the 24th and 25th ultimo reached London in time for the meeting of the committee, and they rejoice with you in the prospect opening before them of great and increasing usefulness in their labours of love towards their brethren in Ireland.

“The committee fully approve of your reimbursing Connellan the expense of clothing and equipping the three young missionaries, and

placing the amount thereof to the debit of the society. Your account of their progress excited considerable interest, and they trust it will be the earnest of yet greater benefit to the hitherto uninformed Irish. My tours in Ireland have afforded me the means of explaining to the members of the committee, the hospitality of the lower orders of the Irish peasantry to travellers, and particularly to those of their own countrymen, who are able to communicate on subjects so interesting to their feelings, as instructing them or their children—an hospitality which, though acceptable to an Irishman, would hardly be valued by an Englishman, or even a Scotchman. Wherefore native teachers are the best instruments to be employed, and for this purpose they must be educated."

Mr. Blest makes the following observations in a letter to Mr. Mills, dated March 2nd, 1812, on the subject of Irish instruction.

"Respecting the Irish Testaments, they are taught in almost all the schools; most of the masters having been prepared for instructing their pupils by our Irish teachers. Each school is supplied with the Testaments, and in some

of them there are already twelve boys who read them. Some of the masters not only instruct their pupils, but also their adult neighbours ; and I can state that none in the country who wish to learn to read Irish, but may receive instruction in the schools free of expense. You may assure the friends of this measure, and the British and Foreign Bible Society, that there is every prospect of the publication of the Irish Testament becoming eventually a blessing to the nation."

Whilst on the subject of instruction in the Irish language, it may be as well to state the plan adopted by Mr. Blest in this department of his labours. He kept a three-fold object in view to provide for the wants of every age.

First—To instruct in the Irish Scriptures those pupils who had learned to read the English, but spoke the vernacular language, that they might be qualified to read them to their parents and neighbours.

Second—To instruct adults, similarly circumstanced, in night schools established, principally, for that purpose. It was required that those persons should commit portions of the Irish Scriptures to memory ; and when this indispen-

sable condition was complied with, they were permitted to receive any literary instruction they might desire from their teachers. This regulation led, under the divine blessing, to the spiritual conversion of many adult Roman Catholics.

Third—To appoint Irish readers both in a local and general capacity according to their respective qualifications, for the benefit of those totally ignorant and too far advanced in life to receive any literary instruction. This salutary provision brought divine truth to bear with an enlightening effect on the minds of many who hitherto had “sat in the region and shadow of death.” While the society’s office was located in Sligo, scarcely a week elapsed without Mr. Blest being visited by individuals benefited by the labours of these Irish readers. As he was not acquainted with the Irish language, he had frequently to employ an interpreter to convey to him the expression of their heart-felt gratitude. Many of them proved faithful amidst fierce persecution, and maintained their integrity in a dying hour, notwithstanding the heart-rending entreaties, and revolting maledictions of relatives and friends. They fought the good fight of faith, and came off more than conquerors, through the great Captain of their salvation.

From the annual report for 1811, the following extract is taken as indicative of the increasing anxiety felt by the London Hibernian Society at that early period of its existence for the establishment of schools on scriptural principles.

“The experience of the Hibernian Society has led to a growing conviction that, next to the dissemination of the Holy Scriptures, there is no practicable mode of doing good so likely to prove efficient as the establishment of schools, where children are taught to read the Bible, and are furnished with such principles of religious truth and moral conduct as are likely, by the grace of God, to be of unspeakable benefit to them in future life.

“The committee has, this year, employed in aid of the general plan of school instruction, the measure of paying school-masters, already established, for considerable numbers of poor children, whom they teach on the society's account. Extensive benefits are anticipated from this arrangement. The Scriptures are introduced into numerous schools, where the children are principally Roman Catholics, and who before were totally unacquainted with the book of heavenly wisdom; the spelling-book published

by the society, which is the only elementary book in the Irish language, and includes a valuable selection of *Scripture lessons*, is universally taught by those masters who receive any payment from the society; and there are some gratifying examples of such masters themselves manifesting that the reading and teaching of the divine word, of which they had been hitherto ignorant, have most desirable effects on their own minds."

The committee then vindicate their employment of Roman Catholic teachers by the following forcible arguments, which were fully borne out by subsequent experience,

"The plan of employing Catholic teachers has powerful recommendations. It introduces the Scriptures into circles of extensive influence, into which they could not otherwise have penetrated. It contributes to break those prejudices which are the heaviest fetters of the mind. It excites the desire of further knowledge, and suggests the means of obtaining it. Above all, it promises, under the merciful and gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, to kindle the celestial fire of true and vital religion in the bosom of the papal church itself. Wherever this divine

energy is felt, most certainly the Saviour of men will be loved and honoured with pure and practical devotion, his word will be studied and obeyed, corruptions and errors will be gradually discovered and renounced, and God in all things will be glorified; but, without this holy and saving energy, should the greatest numbers be converted to the name of Protestantism, such proselytes would receive little benefit from the change; they would bring no blessing to the society, and as large experience has taught, they would almost without exception relapse into popery."

The anticipations of the London committee, expressed in this extract, were more than fully realized by what has since actually occurred. A discussion arose within the last few years, as to the propriety of employing Roman Catholic teachers, which led Mr. Hanly, who is always deeply interested in their conversion, to ascertain the results flowing from the measure adopted very early by the society, and an authentic list has been lately drawn up by him, containing the names of upwards of six hundred individuals, who, with some exceptions, had entered into the service of the society as Romish teachers devoid of any knowledge of scriptural

truth, but who were induced by the reading of the Bible to adopt its principles and precepts as the sole rule of their faith and conduct, and in which principles, those of them who have families, were regularly instructed, thus incorporating a vast number into the reformed faith. Notwithstanding such an overwhelming evidence of the divine blessing on this early regulation, the committee from an unseemly opposition were obliged to come to the determination not to employ Romish teachers unless under very peculiar circumstances.

The following important remarks resulting from Mr. Hanly's ample observations respecting conversions from Romanism are inserted, as they will doubtless prove interesting to the reader.

"I never knew a Roman Catholic who was brought to the knowledge of the truth who did not possess a true Catholic spirit. When his attention was directed to the word of God, and by its perusal convinced of the errors and corruptions of Romanism, his mind became a complete blank. There he stood without an idea of religion—popery is gone, and he is ignorant of every other system. He knows nothing about existing

controversies or opinions. One thing he believes, that the Bible is true; he reads it, and receives unreservedly all its contents. There is now no prejudice, no influence, no prepossessions, no religious sentiments, no associations; the Holy Spirit in his word has to deal with one just prepared for instruction. Not so with the Protestant—when his mind becomes influenced by religion, he may be a Methodist; he comes in contact with an Independent—a controversy ensues; but instead of a debate being decided by the word of God, there is a reference made either to John Wesley or John Calvin. Each reads his favourite, and each settles down in his own opinion. In like manner with baptism. The Separatist denies it altogether, the Baptist pleads for its administration to adults *only*, and another insists on the right of infants to partake of it; but instead of going to the Scriptures for instruction, one reads John Walker, another Alexander Carson, and another Ralph Wardlaw, and each is where each set out. But let all read as little children whose minds are a blank, and there will be unity—man's pride, conceit, self-importance, assumption and arrogance will not interfere with the plain enunciations of revealed truth. It would appear as if the military genius

of our ancestors had so far infected religionists that points of difference were to be decided by single combat; but nothing can pierce the veil with which papal artifice covers the truth of God from the minds of the people but God's word. How did Luther produce such incredible effects? How did he root out error and superstition? By the free circulation of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. And respecting the difficulties to be surmounted in order to the spiritual emancipation of Romanists, were the destiny of Ireland now placed in my hands, and were the choice left to me whether I would prefer to reclaim it from barbarism or Romanism, I would say let me have barbarism even with all its atrocities. Barbarism may soon be overcome by physical force and human intelligence; but when false religion becomes embedded in the human heart—when it becomes a part and parcel of the moral constitution, it may never be removed, as the only remedy may never be provided. Nothing can do it but the power of divine grace, through the instrumentality of God's word. This the London Hibernian Society is endeavouring to accomplish in the midst of every difficulty. The priests are opposed to the remedy—the

parents know not its value, and unless we rescue their offspring, they will suffer by the cunning duplicity of the former, and the ignorance of the latter."

Similar sentiments evidently influenced the minds of the individuals who composed the deputation to Ireland in 1807, when they declared in their report—

"The hope, therefore, that the Irish will ever be a tranquil and loyal people, and still more that piety and virtue will flourish among them, must be built on the anticipated reduction of popery."

Whilst such was the object of the London Hibernian Society, the London committee authorized J. E. Gordon, Esq. to address a letter, dated March 18, 1825, to T. F. Lewis, Esq. the chairman of the then Education Commission, from which the following quotations are taken.

"Proselytism, as confined to a mere religious change of profession, forms no part of the society's system. No interference with ritual distinction is permitted in the schools; no attempt at such interference has come within the knowledge of the committee; and there is not

probably a school in the society's connexion, where the parents of Roman Catholic children in attendance would not readily bear testimony to the good faith which has been kept by the institution in the observance of this understanding. To these may be added the sentiments of the committee of 1811, delivered in the report of that year. Referring to the 'divine energy of true and vital religion,' the committee observe: 'without this holy and saving energy, should the greatest number be converted to the name of Protestantism, such proselytes would receive little benefit from the change. They would bring no blessing to the society, and as large experience has taught, they would almost without exception relapse into popery.' As far, therefore, as proselytism includes a reference to a particular creed, the committee would discharge the idea from both the intention and practice of the society; but in conveying more distinctly to the commissioners their understanding upon the subject, they would lay down the broad and intelligible distinction which subsists between proselytism, in the sense in which they disclaimed it, and those changes, or more properly *conversions*, which, in the language of the same report, 'are as applicable to the

Protestant as the Roman Catholic, and uniformly described to consist in *a religious and moral transformation of character, never in exchanging the mere ceremonial of one church for that of another.* Instances of such conversion as this, will ever be found to be a consequence of the unrestricted use of the Scriptures; and as they owe their reality to the divine efficacy of that word, so will society be indebted for their numbers to the extent of its free circulation. *Such conversions as these, the committee unequivocally associate with the plan and designs of the society;* and if the question should be asked, as it not unfrequently is, whether such conversions involve an abandonment of the Roman Catholic church, the committee in speaking from experience, will candidly avow *their conviction that they do.*

“The evidence then that is founded upon the fact that the society makes proselytes from the Roman Catholic communion, amounts to nothing more than the proof that its practice is consistent with its avowed profession, of introducing the minds of its pupils to a general acquaintance with the truths of Scripture.

“With respect to the particular class of

proofs which are said to be discoverable in the correspondence of the society, the committee would draw the distinction between instances of reported conversion, and cases of practical interference with the tenets of the children in school. Cases of the description which are usually stated in the report are, *facts of conversion wrought by the simple efficacy of divine truth, not by interference upon the part of the society with the religious peculiarities of the scholars*; and however the policy of such statements may be questioned by some, the statements themselves supply no proof of improper deviation from a strictly neutral practice in the schools."

That the conduct of Mr. Blest as agent of the society was in full accordance with the foregoing statements is evident from a declaration signed by sixteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven heads of families, of whom *nine thousand three hundred and sixty were Romanists* whose children were educated in the society's schools, and testifying "that, although reading and committing to memory the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, are required of the reading classes by the printed regulations of the society, no inspector, agent, or schoolmaster, in the employment of the society, has, at any time

since the formation of the school, by any means directly or indirectly, sought to proselytize our children, or attach them to any religious denomination whatever." In reference to this document J. E. Gordon, Esq. remarks in his examination in 1825 before the Commissioners of Education:

"With respect to the bulk of the peasantry, I have not met with any thing but the most cordial approbation of the system; and in proof of this statement, I would refer to a case in which the society made an experiment to ascertain the feelings of the lower orders, by proposing for signature a certificate from the parents of the Roman Catholic children in attendance in the schools; upwards of four hundred copies of this document were signed by Roman Catholics, and probably three times that number would have been procured, had not the Roman Catholic clergy discovered the design, and repressed the signatures."

Having given in detail the early operations of this society, and the principles by which it was actuated, the author now directs the attention of the reader to that period (1814) when the society confined its labours to education, and the gratuitous distribution of the Holy Scrip-

tures in the English and Irish languages. Mr. Blest had established, during the four previous years, schools (of which the following is an abstract) in the province of Connaught :—

In 1811, 39 schools, containing 1,500 pupils.

1812,	38	„	„	1,510	„
1813,	51	„	„	3,143	„
1814,	145	„	„	8,342	„

The pleasing prospect of increasing usefulness which Mr. Blest's educational exertions in an experimental way presented to the London Committee, arrested their attention. In February, 1814, Mr. Mills wrote to Mr. Blest, that "the committee, on taking a review of the progress of the society from its commencement, and considering what impediments existed in its constitution, and wherein it might be made subservient to general utility in a national point of view, resolved to call a special general meeting of the society, and submit their deliberations to the members so convened;" and the reader is already in possession of the result. There was much wisdom evinced in taking timely advantage of the providential opening which then presented itself; and subsequent events fully justified the

line of procedure which was adopted. And when it is taken into account that the members of the committee, at this period, were individuals belonging to various religious denominations, they are justly entitled to much commendation for merging their peculiarities in cordial co-operation in a plan most conducive to general utility. In fact, the promotion of God's glory, and not party interest, was their object. The obstacles connected with the preaching department had been clearly pointed out more than two years previously by Mr. Blest, and subsequent experience proved the correctness of his views. The important step then taken affords a powerful evidence to refute every charge of sectarianism brought against the society. The object which the committee were anxious to realize was, *an united system of education based on the revealed word of God, as the source from which all religious denominations professed, either more or less, to derive their peculiar sentiments.*

The Romish hierarchy and priesthood perceived at a glance the effect which this system of education, as far as their church was concerned would necessarily produce, and a loud outcry was raised against proselytism. Mr.

Blest boldly meets this accusation in a letter to a correspondent :—

“ The Bible, indeed, can never fail of being a proselytizing book ; its object being to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But except in putting this best of books into the hands of its pupils, and treasuring it up in their memories, the enemies of the London Hibernian Society can find nothing in the process of education afforded by it, to which they can object.”

The following interesting letter on the same subject, is addressed to the Rev. James Finan, P.P., Banada, county of Sligo :—

“ 13th March, 1820.

“ My dear Sir—The knowledge I have of your good sense and information frees me from all restraint in addressing you on the subject of the schools ; and did the issue depend on the dictates of your head and heart, I have little doubt that the result of my application to you would be favourable. I know ‘ that the powers *that are*’ in the distinct circle in which you professionally move, are in full opposition to

our schools; but very shortly you and I will be removed from all connection with the angry parties, which particular and opposing interests have generated in this world, and be only concerned in giving an account how we have conducted ourselves with regard to the revealed will of Him, with whom we will then alone have to do, and which could not have failed in commending itself to our consciences as 'holy, just, and good.'

"We are charged with the design of proselytism, and I freely confess that in a certain sense, the work to which Saul of Tarsus was called is precisely our object—namely, 'turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God!' Alas! my dear sir, is not this necessary? Is it not a Christian duty, to the performance of which, all who call Jesus Lord are indispensably bound, as they have opportunity, and in proportion to their influence and talents, committed to their occupancy. But you may say 'this may produce desertions from the cause I am pledged to support.' Be it so: you will surely join with me in saying—Let party interest perish, if to support it, there may be a necessity to keep men ignorant of the words of eternal life, and to involve them in that

awful denunciation—‘Because they are a people of no understanding, He that made ⁴them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show no favour.’—Isa. xxvii. 12. Other party interest, or a desire to proselytize, I most sincerely disclaim; nor is any other the object of the society. This is honestly detailed in the enclosed prospectus, which I submit to your consideration, and I will feel much pleasure in placing under your superintendence as many schools as the poor of your parish require, to be conducted precisely according to the regulations therein enumerated and explained.

“I will have great pleasure in receiving your commands, and have the honour to be, my dear sir, your respectful and obedient servant,

“ALBERT BLEST.”

Mr. Blest thus writes to a Romish priest in all the dignified calmness, and unshrinking fidelity of a Christian patriot; and whatever other effect might have been produced on Mr. Finan’s mind, he ceased all opposition to the society’s schools. It is now the author’s privilege to bring before the reader the following extract from a letter to Mr. Mills, dated 21st March, 1820, in which he alludes to the success vouchsafed to the society in reviving the

principles of Protestantism among its professors, scattered but thinly over the surface of Romish districts. The subject had evidently touched one of the highest chords of his Christian-sensibility, and he gives utterance to his thoughts in language, which cannot fail to produce a corresponding emotion in the heart of every sincere Protestant.

“ You allude to the thanksgiving on the part of many who formerly were benighted ‘ dwellers in our bogs and glens,’ but who now behold the Sun of righteousness, bless God for the day of their merciful visitation, and pour out their hearts in prayer for blessings on their unknown benefactors. Although evidence to the fact is almost daily brought to my observation, I have been sparing in my communications respecting the subject, as it is noticed occasionally in the reports of our inspectors and readers. However, as instances of this sort (related by them) generally referred to Roman Catholics, I think it is necessary that the committee and the society at large, should know that their labours are universally hailed by the isolated Protestants of the kingdom, as a merciful dispensation of the God of their fathers, to rescue them and their offspring from the delusions of popery, to which they were so imminently ex-

posed. Within the all-absorbing power of this vortex they have for centuries been placed, without the anchor of divine truth to resist its force, or skilful pilots to direct their course. Thousands have, alas! sunk to rise no more; and that in any of the country parts of the popish counties, the name of Protestant designates any inhabitant, arose providentially from the elective franchise being exclusively connected with the profession of Protestantism for so long a period. But this left them no more than the name. The Holy Scriptures were universally neglected. Where bibles were found, they were regarded as a piece of family furniture, handed down from father to son, and seldom referred to, except as a register of births and deaths. Thus ignorant of the truth which sets free, they became slaves to the superstitious observances of the multitude—participated in their fears, and generally when at the point of death, took refuge in their delusive hope. Much, indeed, had been done by the Wesleyan Methodists, before the commencement of the society's labours, to keep alive the spark of zeal for Protestant principles, where Protestants existed in such numbers, as to afford a small congregation in the immediate neighbourhood, and that a person was found will.

ing to support a preacher and his horse. But the circumstances of the great majority of those who bore the Protestant name, precluded the possibility of their enjoying even this advantage; being remote from a church, destitute of a teacher, without a Bible or a Testament—their families uneducated, and many of the parents unable to read, breathing an atmosphere saturated with popery. How miserable the state of these outcasts! But He who came to seek and save that which was lost, pitied their condition, and in the schools brought them health and a cure. Familiar with the Scriptures through the instrumentality of their children, they now perceive from whence they are fallen, and the precipice over which they hung. Consequently, a zeal for more than the name of Protestant, is now nearly as general among those so circumstanced, as indifference to Protestant profession, ignorance to its principles, and leaning towards popery formerly prevailed. The popish hierarchy loudly proclaim, that their opposition to the schools originated solely in their zeal to preserve their own people, from being contaminated with heretical pravity. But this is not the truth—the whole truth. No. They sicken at the appearance of this revival of

Protestant principles among Protestants, and the idea of being deprived of a prey on which they calculated as their own.

“ Perhaps I have touched on this subject before, but I do not recollect that it has been brought forward prominently in any of your reports; and for this reason, I have dwelt on it, at such length, on the present occasion. Happy would I be if Protestant Britain viewed it in all the extent of its importance. Then the society would not want support. A holy confederacy would be formed to continue to rescue from the marshes of the Tiber, the thousands and tens of thousands of the perishing offspring of those original settlers of this kingdom who knew and loved their Bibles, and had probably sealed the truth with their blood.”

It is a remarkable fact, that so early as the year 1819, Mr. Blest states to his friend and fellow-labourer, Mr. Steven, the difficulties which the government would have to encounter in establishing a national system of education in Ireland. What has since occurred, corroborates his observations on that subject. He thus writes—

“ No system of education can ever be benefi-

cial to the people of this kingdom, or productive of tranquillity to the country, but that which directly saps the foundation of the long prevalent delusions, which have rendered the lower orders seditious, and at heart enemies to the government. Such a system cannot be publicly sanctioned and supported by government, without furnishing the demagogues of the party, with materials for an incessant outcry against the measure ; and such is the state of feeling in the lower orders, and so great their jealousy of any measure known to emanate from government, that the suggestions of their leaders would form the law of their conduct, and the boon would not be accepted. These considerations in my opinion (and I have long considered the subject) militate against a national system. Let government aid charitable institutions, which have given proof, that the true interests of the people, and not party design is their object, and whose plans are matured and efficient ; and the work will indeed not be ostentatious, but it will silently and powerfully advance, and the end will be glorious."

The author considered it would be more interesting to give an *exposé* of the objects and

principles of the society from documents, furnished him, than to give a mere statistical detail of its operations, as they afford a very satisfactory account of the system of instruction and inspection, which when matured—and that in a gradual way as exigencies rendered necessary—led to the adoption of well-defined regulations, which being duly submitted to the London Committee by Mr. Blest, received their warm approval, directing at the same time that all schools under their management should be wholly governed by those admirable rules, and that they should form the basis of future payments to the teachers. It cannot fail to strike the mind of the reader, that the system was the result of experience, and not the development of theory.

“ In the establishment of schools, two important considerations presented themselves: first, to meet the pressing demand for education in localities hitherto destitute of it; second, the affiliation of hedge schools already in existence. For both these description of schools, elementary books were provided by the society, that the holy and peaceable precepts of the divine word, might supplant histories of a treasonable and

immoral character so long the class books of Irish children. At first, Mr. Blest took a few schools into connexion with the society, agreeing with the teachers to pay them one guinea per quarter for each twenty pupils—the highest number not to exceed forty, which would afford eight guineas a year to the teacher, besides books to the scholars. After a short time, it was found that some check was necessary to secure attention on the part of the teacher, and diligence on the part of the pupils. A roll was then constructed, having a column for the pupils' names, and seventy-eight for the week-days in the quarter, in which to mark the attendance or absence. But it was soon discovered that the teachers almost invariably set down the pupils as present, so that it was by itself altogether useless. To meet this, it was suggested that a document would be necessary to ascertain the quarterly proficiency of the pupils, and which would be a good criterion as to their attendance. A class paper was accordingly provided, on which was to be recorded the class in which each child commenced on entering the school, and his subsequent progress. But here again we were partially defeated. We had at that period very few visitors of our schools, and consequently the

classification of the pupils had to be left in the hands of our teachers. They soon, however, discovered a way by which, had they succeeded, they would receive the society's money without any equivalent; and that was by entering the pupils in classes inferior to their actual attainments. Individuals of discernment and probity who were capable of detecting imposition, and pointing out its sinfulness when practised, were then employed as inspectors. It pleased God, by the conversion of some of our first teachers, to enable us to meet that demand; and to prevent all imposition, it was directed that no teacher should class his pupils. This was to be attended to by the quarterly inspector, who was also to transcribe the class paper into his district book each quarter; adding the promotions for the direction of the person who might succeed him in the district, that in case any teacher made the slightest alteration, it would at once be detected. It was also arranged with the visitors of the schools that all pupils, entering since the last inspection, should be classed by them; the numbers so registered, to be endorsed on the back of the class paper with their signatures. Otherwise that all such accessions to the schools would not be allowed for, until their standing was

sanctioned by the visitor or inspector. The latter was always to attach the initials of his name to the promotions on the class paper, at the close of each quarterly inspection, to prevent any subsequent alteration by the teacher.

“Having proceeded so far, and inspectors being employed, it was supposed that the system was perfect. The inspectors were sent to their respective districts to examine the schools, and report the proficiency of each scholar. But not having at the time any fixed rule as to what was required, the inspector came into frequent collision with the teachers; as both parties differed in opinion, as to what ought to be the attainments of the scholars during the preceding quarter. This led to a meeting of some of the most intelligent of the teachers, inspectors, &c., when the following rules were drawn up, and subsequently sanctioned by the London Committee—

SCALE OF PROFICIENCY,

For Ascertaining the Amount Payable to Teachers.

Pupils entered in the following classes must be qualified to pass into the next class in succession within the following periods:—

Alphabet Class in two months,
Junior Spelling Class in four months,
Senior Spelling Class in three months,
Spelling-Book Readers in three months.

WRITING AND CYPHERING.

The strictest attention is to be paid to the regulations for the improvement of Pupils in General Education, and especially in Writing and Arithmetic. As the Society now provides both *Slates* and *Paper*, it is to be clearly understood, that wherever there is palpable neglect under this head, the Teacher is liable to have all stipend withheld.—No Scholar in any School can possibly be allowed the use of Slates, or be supplied with Paper, unless attending to all the Regulations of the Society, and particularly to the reading and committal to memory of the Holy Scriptures.

WRITING.

Each Pupil is to commence Writing on entering into the Spelling-Book Reading Class.

SCALE OF PROFICIENCY.

1st Quarter.	Forming letters in large hand.
2nd ,,	Combination of letters into syllables, with the formation of figures.
3rd ,,	Fair formation of words in large hand.
4th ,,	Sentences in large hand, and formation of Capitals.
5th ,,	Round hand.
6th ,,	A fair round hand,
7th ,,	Small hand.
8th ,,	Writing a fair and free small hand.

CYPHERING.

Each Pupil on entering the Testament Class is to commence the study of Figures.

1st Quarter.	—	Numeration, Simple and Compound Addition, and committing to memory the tables, commencing in Spelling-Book, No. 2, page 87.
2nd	„	Subtraction of Plain and Compound Numbers, committing to memory the Multiplication Table, and the capability of multiplying by two figures.
3rd	„	Multiplication completed, and Division.
4th	„	Reduction and Short Accounts.
5th	„	Rule of Proportion, its nature and application.
6th	„	Vulgar Fractions.
7th	„	Decimals and Mensuration of right line Figures.
8th	„	Book-keeping.

N.B.—The Teachers are to instruct such Pupils in English Grammar as may require it.

TASKS.

Each Pupil in the following Classes is, at the General Inspection for the Quarter, correctly to repeat from memory, as follows :—

Spelling-Book Reader's Class.—Four pages in the Reading Lessons, and two pages of the Spelling Columns in Spelling-Book, Part the second.

Bible Class.—Four Chapters, two from the Old and two from the New Testament, the latter from the Gospels, Acts, or Epistles, selected by the Visitor or the Inspector, at the preceding Inspection, and four pages of the Spelling Columns aforesaid.

The Teachers are *not* to be paid for any Pupils whose proficiency does not correspond with all the preceding requisitions, and it is discretionary with the Inspector to deduct the value of the absent days of those Pupils who barely pass.

INSTRUCTIONS IN READING IRISH.

The art of reading Irish in the Roman or Celtic character, is to be taught *all Pupils who may desire it* ; and all Masters in Districts where the Irish is the common language of the adult population, *are required* to form an Irish Class ; and for the extra attention and trouble attending the instruction of Irish Classes, an additional allowance of half-pay is granted the Teacher.

ADULT SCHOOLS.

In the Winter season, Adult Schools shall be held in the evenings, or at other suitable times, under the direction of the Visitors, Agents, &c., for the benefit of persons of riper years, who are desirous of Scriptural education. The Teacher shall not, however, be entitled to extra remuneration on account of the attendance of any of his Day-School Pupils at the Adult School.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

Where Sunday Schools, under the Sunday School Society, do not exist, the Society's Teachers may open Sunday Schools. Books and Regulations will be supplied by the Agent.

“ Dishonest masters still endeavoured to violate these regulations, by causing some of their pupils to personate others who were absent. This was effected by change of clothes and a variety of ways, and some went even so far as to borrow children from neighbouring schools. In the latter case the inspector's own recollection

enabled him to discover the deception attempted to be practised on him. To obviate the former evil, it was ruled that on the day of inspection, the teacher should have his pupils assembled at a certain hour; and that after the arrival of the inspector, none were to be permitted to leave the school-house. The pupils in each class to be arranged according to their numbers in the class paper, and entered on a blank sheet of paper. The examination to commence with the alphabet class, marking those deficient, and those proficient; and dismissing that class from the school when examined, to proceed in a similar way, until he arrived at the reading classes. As these involved examination in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, and the grammatical import of the Scriptures read or committed to memory, and consequently occupied a considerable portion of time, they were to be inspected last in order; and frequently he had to adjourn to a second day, from the quantity of Scripture prepared by many of the pupils for repetition. The system became thus so completely arranged, that we could, without difficulty, discover the slightest imposition.

“ Every thing was now arranged, so far as the rising generation was concerned; and the causes

which led to the establishment of adult schools, may here be briefly adverted to. The pupils of our schools were always permitted to take their books to their own homes; and, indeed, the regulation which prevented the school-hours being occupied by a committal of their tasks, rendered that practice absolutely necessary. They were often obliged to apply for assistance to their parents and relatives, who, when ignorant, were unable to render them any aid. This circumstance, which may appear trivial, gave such an impetus to the mind of the adult population, that the society found it necessary to establish night schools for their instruction, at which none were permitted to attend under the age of fifteen years, as such might attend on day schools, unless proved to the satisfaction of the inspector that they were at service."

(The regulations under which these schools were conducted, are already given under the head of Irish instruction, as they were of a mixed character.)

"Female instruction was not forgotten. The adult schools had been hitherto only attended

by males, but the committee found it necessary to establish schools for the adult female sex; and in making arrangements for that purpose, a considerable saving of expenditure was effected. Hitherto a separate and distinct corps of inspectors had been employed for the examination of the adult night schools; but it was now regulated, that the regular district inspector should examine all the adults, male and female, on the same day with the pupils attending the daily schools. Upwards of five thousand adult females received scriptural instruction annually. What a happy influence this must have had on the peasantry of Ireland. This species of female instruction was never particularly referred to, in any of the society's annual reports, at least so far as I can recollect. Shortly after this arrangement, the Lord put it into the hearts of some influential and pious English ladies to form a society for the express purpose of educating the peasant females of Ireland; and of this association a member of the Royal Family became the patroness. And when we contemplate woman, as an immortal being—the mother of the human race—the tender guardian of man's helpless infancy—the guide of his childhood and youth—the partner of his bosom—the

soother of his cares—is she not, when placed in humble life, an object worthy of our Christian sympathy and exertion ?

“ The labours of the society did not end here. Suitable persons were appointed to act as *circulating teachers*, whose duty it was to visit isolated districts. They were of that class of persons which it was the object of the society to seek out and benefit. They spoke and read fluently the Irish language, understood the Scriptures well, and were sent forth, under the divine protection and guidance, with directions to regulate their proceedings according to instructions, of which the following is a brief outline :—

“ 1. To visit remote districts in which there were no schools of any description.

“ 2. To read to the inhabitants the Irish Scriptures.

“ 3. To open, as soon as possible, a school into which the society's books were to be introduced.

“ 4. To go home with their pupils, taking whatever fare the parents could afford them ; and improving those opportunities by reading for the inmates of the house, and all others who would listen to the word of God.

“5. Not to depart until the object of their mission was secured, by the establishment of a school under the direction of a suitable master.

“6. Should persecution commence, not to flee unless in case of personal danger.

“7. If compelled to remove, to commence in another district.

“8. To supply all who were anxious to obtain one, with a copy of the New Testament.

“9. If a house could not be procured in the village, in which to hold the school, to visit all the houses in succession, and instruct the children; and, while doing so, not to neglect the parents and adults.

“This department of the society's labours was not of long continuance. Through the instrumentality of our schools, teachers so multiplied, that we had a sufficient supply; and the necessity for circulating masters consequently no longer existed. Such was the desire, at this time, on the part of the people, for the education of their children, that the services of these individuals, educated in our schools, were gladly accepted of; and we had more demand for schools than the funds enabled the society to meet. Subsequent experience

pointed out the necessity of employing two or more qualified persons in the capacity of general readers, and cursory inspectors, confining their labours to schools in neglected or Romish districts, and not favoured with any local superintendence. The rules laid down for their guidance were—

“1. To read and explain the Scriptures, in the English and Irish languages, to villagers in the mornings and evenings, and to keep a journal for the information of the London Committee.

“To visit the schools without previous warning:—First, to ascertain the daily attendance; second, to examine the Scripture classes in reading and repetition; third, to class all pupils who might have entered the school since the last quarterly inspection; fourth, to examine into the state of the books provided by the society, and to order a fresh supply if necessary; fifth, to see if objectionable books were privily introduced; sixth, to report on all those matters for the information of the agent, to regulate the payments of the respective teachers.’

“We had also local Scripture readers, whose duty it was to read the Scriptures to their neighbours during the evenings. As they were generally teachers of approved character and

piety, we found them very useful auxiliaries, and their services were procured at the low rate of from three pounds to five pounds per annum."

This interesting detail is well worthy the careful perusal of the reader, as exhibiting the simple, but at the same time judiciously-arranged and effective machinery, employed by Mr. Blest, for the furtherance of the society's objects. It was drawn up by one who was Mr. Blest's confidential and efficient assistant from the year 1814, and of whom he wrote to a dignitary of the church, about two months before his death, that "his zeal in rescuing the deluded from the errors of the anti-Christian system had been consistent, exemplary, and successful." When the system was fully matured, his late Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, became patron; the Marquess of Lansdowne, president; and the list of vice-presidents contained the names of influential persons of both Whig and Tory principles.

This admirable plan of scriptural instruction, acting on the adult and youthful mind of the Irish peasantry could not fail, in the course of a few years, to produce a very powerful effect in the respective districts in which it had been in opera-

tion. Other religious societies may have subsequently co-operated in the good work; but it cannot be denied that the London Hibernian Society was the first to cultivate the moral wilderness. For instance, it commenced its labours in the county of Cavan, in the year 1815, with four schools, which gradually increased in number until 1820, when they amounted to forty-one, at an annual expense of £550 14s. 5d.

For the six succeeding years, in the same county, the number of schools, and amount of expenditure, varying according to the remuneration merited by the teachers, were according to the following abstract :—

In 1821, 44 schools containing	4,540 pupils,	£410	3	3
1822, 49 " "	4,597 "	364	13	9
1823, 65 " "	5,550 "	427	2	10
1824, 88 " "	7,230 "	443	8	10
1825, 64* " "	5,089 "	315	3	5
1826, 61 " "	4,494 "	232	6	2

A wonderful movement had in the meantime taken place. Hundreds of individuals had renounced Romanism, and conformed to the Established Church, in this locality and

* This decrease of schools was occasioned by the exclusive adherence of some to the Kildare-place Society, hitherto in joint connexion with it and the London Hibernian Society.

other districts of Ireland, in which the society had laboured to a greater or a less extent. Cavan, however, stood prominently forward as the scene of conversion to Protestantism, and the then pious Lord and Lady Farnham took an active part in it. It is thought by many that if the work had been permitted to advance silently, it would have made much more extensive progress: as the notoriety given to the proceedings excited the attention, and aroused the fears of the Romish hierarchy; a deputation of which went to Cavan to investigate the matter, and devise plans for its suppression. Two centuries before this period the indefatigable Bedell had laboured in this very diocese; and how very appropriate to the present occasion are the following remarks made by Mr. Blest to Mr. Mills, though written in the year 1818, in allusion to the Christian exertions then making, especially in behalf of Ireland :—

“Did not many prophets and righteous men desire to see this day? Yes; and is it presumption to say, that they now see and rejoice? If the spirits of the just groan beneath the altar, conscious of the continuation of the reign of error on the earth, will the Lord, to whom

they continually cry, hide from his servants the wonders he is at present doing, in answer to their prayers?—No. Ussher and Bedell, who spent their day sowing in tears, and ended their lives—the one in exile, and the other a prisoner in the hands of a murderous rabble—no doubt share in the joy of the reapers here below, and hear, with a holy triumph, and with a redoubled hallelujah, of the Sun of Righteousness, arising on their beloved Erin, which, when earth was receding from their view, they beheld enveloped in all the darkness of popery.”

The late Rev. William Armstrong, of Calry, Sligo, who took an active part in the locality of his ministerial labours, during the period under review, bore the following honourable testimony to the labours of the London Hibernian Society, as being instrumental in bringing about this reformatory movement:—

“Sligo, January 2, 1840.

“The London Hibernian Society can appeal with confidence to your experience of the extensive good effects produced by its system of education. It has carried the knowledge of the Scriptures into the remotest glens, and

the wildest morasses of our native land. Its fertilizing influence has been felt in the most barren tracts; in many a moral desert have fruits of righteousness been made to bloom. It has turned the hedge school—the once focus of sedition—the source of every impure thought—into a fountain of ‘wisdom, pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy and good fruits.’

“It is notorious that the great movement amongst the Romanists, about the year 1827, when many renounced the errors of popery, who had been ever since amongst the best, the steadiest, and most sincere professors of the reformed faith, had its commencement in our schools. The master, while hearing the Scripture tasks of his pupils, imbibed the principles of the Sacred Word, and became, through his family and relatives, an agent of extensive good. The apparent check put to that reformation arose from the fact that there were no more to come forward with a profession of the truth after *the numbers were exhausted* of those who had been silently, and for a series of years, prepared for *such profession by means of this society.*”

Such evidence as this fully refutes the charges occasionally brought against the society by mis-

informed persons, as being inimical to the Established Church. The very fact that the committee constituted the parochial clergy the *ex-officio* patrons and visitors of its schools, and never interfered with the appointment of the teachers, unless to ascertain their competency and character, prove that it was not actuated by unfriendly motives. From the extracts already selected from the society's earliest documents, and Mr. Blest's correspondence, it is quite evident that its conductors entertained no feelings towards the Church of Ireland, but what resulted from the most sincere anxiety for her spiritual welfare; and when a suitable opportunity offered, they freely and joyfully deposited the first fruits of their labours upon her altar.

As already remarked, the Romish prelates were not inattentive to the signs of the times. In 1824, they presented a petition to the House of Commons, complaining that the parliamentary grants for educational purposes were applied solely to the benefit of schools in which the Holy Scriptures were read without note or comment, and that their clergy were thereby prevented from deriving any advantage from them for the children of their communion. This led to a royal commission being issued, in the June of

that year, to five individuals to examine into the state of education in Ireland. The most searching scrutiny was instituted; and every supposed and real abuse, in every institution of a purely Protestant character, was made the subject of their condemnation. The Foundling Hospital, and the Charter Schools, were the first victims. The next in order was the Association for Discountenancing Vice, and Promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion. That useful national institution the Kildare-place Society, for the education of the poor, was prevented from rendering any assistance to the schools connected with other societies; and though protected for some years longer, by an annual parliamentary grant, it also eventually shared the fate of its contemporaries. The Lord Lieutenant's School Fund, established on the principle mentioned by Mr. Blest, in his letter to Mr. Steven, in the year 1819, to aid schools supported by voluntary subscriptions, was also discontinued. At length, in the year 1831, the present system of national education was established; but these political changes had rather a favourable effect on the operations of the London Hibernian Society. There was a

gradual increase of its schools to the very period of Mr. Blest's death ; and during that current year three hundred and ninety-three schools were added to the list. Under the agency of his successor, Captain J. Banks, R.N., there was a further increase of sixty-seven schools during the following year. The gradual defection of dissenters has latterly placed the society under the sole management of members of the Established Church.

The following brief statistical detail will bring before the reader, at one glance, the past and present state of the society's operations : —

In 1815,	242	Schools,	11,916	Pupils.
1816,	320	"	19,312	"
1817,	347	"	27,776	"
1818,	392	"	32,516	"
1819,	480	"	46,976	"
1820,	529	"	58,202	"
1821,	534	"	54,520	"
1822,	575	"	53,233	"
1823,	764	"	66,873	"
1824,	1,072	"	88,699	"
1825,	1,147	"	94,262	"
1826,	1,196	"	92,083	"
1827,	977	"	63,122	"
1828,	1,046	"	67,326	"
1829,	1,354	"	76,444	"
1830,	1,373	"	80,513	"

In 1831,	1,535	Schools,	85,755	Papils.
1832,	1,569	"	90,085	"
1833,	1,690	"	100,113	"
1834,	1,880	"	108,176	"
1835,	1,945	"	114,486	"
1836,	1,962	"	115,323	"
1837,	2,355	"	135,933	"
1838,	2,422	"	139,091	"
1839,	2,221	"	117,122	"
1840,	2,242	"	114,170	"
1841,	2,167	"	158,805	"
1842,	1,825	"	89,139	"

Upon a review of the whole subject it may be truly said of the London Hibernian Society, that it first introduced a system of scriptural education adapted to the popular wants of Ireland—that it first taught the Irish to read the Sacred Scriptures in their own tongue—that it first provided for them elementary books in their vernacular dialect—that it first demonstrated the practicability of that plan, although by different means, which the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry have declared to be desirable—namely, *the uniting of children of the different religious persuasions in Ireland for the purpose of instructing them in the general objects of literary knowledge*—that it first demonstrated the practicability of inducing

the Irish peasant to resist the arbitrary mandate of his priest ; and by employing Roman Catholic teachers, and Irish readers, enlisted his very prejudices in the cause of scriptural education.* These important services were performed zealously and faithfully amidst reproach and calumny, and many discouraging circumstances ; and to its honour be it recorded, that it never cherished feelings of rivalry towards any association subsequently formed for the purpose of specially carrying out any of its various plans

* The following extract from an official document furnished to the Dublin almanacs, refers to the result of Irish instruction :—" The society have introduced the vernacular tongue into their system of education, by means of a class of schoolmasters trained in one of the schools of the society. These were afterwards distributed as teachers of those masters who could *speak*, but not *read* the language ; and this extension of the practice formed the basis of an Irish class in each school, in situations, at least, where a preference for such instruction was found. This experiment, conducted on a very extended scale of practice, has fully ascertained the existence of a passionate attachment to the language, on the part of such of the adult population as are habituated to speak the language, and an almost equal aversion to its becoming the medium of instruction of their offspring at school—an aversion not to the literary acquisition of Irish, but the occupation of the children's time and attention to the acquirement of what, prospectively considered, promises no adequate advantage in the using."

of usefulness. It viewed such as fellow-labourers in the work of the Lord; and with all the cordiality of sincere affection rejoiced that it prospered in their hands.

APPENDIX.

CORRESPONDENCE ILLUSTRATIVE OF MR. BLEST'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

*To the late Rev. John Walker, formerly Fellow of Trinity
College, Dublin.*

"MY DEAR SIR—I only received yours of the 9th instant two days since, I presume you gave it to Andrew, and that he, for some reason, sent it by post. I not only, my dear sir, 'bear with you,' but am thankful for the communication of your doubts respecting my character as a professor of the religion of Jesus; as I trust it has proceeded from Christian affection and plain fidelity. May I be preserved from seeking to avoid the force of your observations, when I should plead guilty; and may you, my dear sir, be preserved from a spirit that I have long perceived, if not to proceed from, at least to accompany, the separating principle on which you act—that is, an anxiety to catch at some ground of objection against the reality of the profession of those with whom your present sentiments will not allow you, as before, cordially to unite as Christian brethren. The true reason of their following not with you is sought to be evaded, or at least hidden from your own eyes, though sufficiently obvious to others.

"Respecting my character, if you knew it better you could be more pointed, nor would the compass of a letter

serve for the communication of faithful reproof ; but perhaps many more items have been suppressed from the feeling that you also possess a nature encompassed with infirmities, and these are selected as more inconsistent with the reality of Christian hope. I shall honestly reply to them in order.

"The first is unscriptural confidence in a profession of long standing. Whatever cause you have had to mention it, my heart in truth pleads not guilty. No, my dear sir, my confidence at the first, and ever since to the present moment, has had but one ground, and that is the same that gave birth to the prayer of the dying thief. And though I trust I am not unacquainted with the devices of Satan, and the mazes of a deceitful heart : looking to Him in whom I have believed, I think I can defy both, ever to supplant this confidence by the substitution of another.

"The second is my letter to J—— H——. Here you had a degree of pleasure in my seeming to acknowledge the scriptural view of justifying faith. But you had deep regret in my qualifying the acknowledgment, as I seemed to think that, however 'a few leaders should adopt these views, yet the secret would be dangerous for the generality of people.' As you mention that this principally shook your brotherly confidence, I confess I am at a loss to know why I did not at the moment hear from you on the subject ; or why for years it was permitted to remain in your mind as the foundation for increasing doubt, and though I received more than one letter from you since, it was, until the arrival of your last, kept a secret from me. But I do not recriminate respecting the charge you prefer against me, as I do not recollect any more than you do, the words, or even the sentiments, of my letter. I can only say, that the idea you entertained has not at any time been an opinion of mine. I do with you 'scarcely think the man has any view of the Gospel, who can seriously think that clear views of it are dangerous to any.' But I think many who never 'knew the secret of the Lord,' may, nay, do rest upon a clearness of expression of those views as the faith of the Gospel, and mistaking their clearness of expression for a simple belief of the

truth are confirmed in a delusive hope by what they esteem the self-denied works of (with pleasure I observe you allow) a justifying faith. There surely is another faith.

"You are not much better pleased with the light manner in which I treat the *discoveries* of the day; or the blunders and errors in expression that have escaped Hervey, Whitfield, and Romaine. Clearness of views on religious subjects should not be included in the discoveries of the day. What ought with propriety, to be so denominated, are those novel opinions for which we in vain turn to the inspired records from which the saints of God derived their sentiments. In one sense, viewing the undue importance attached to them, they cannot be treated, in my opinion, too lightly. In another sense, from the awful consequences arising from their being made a bond of Christian union, lightness would, indeed, be highly improper. In the latter view I behold both them and their consequences with deep regret; nor can I join you in harbouring a doubt that the individuals before mentioned had, as the ground of their hope, a belief in anywise contrary to the truth: no more than I entertain a doubt that when you, with much success, preached and wrote in the same manner, *you* were destitute of it; or enjoyed less of its delights than you do now.

"Respecting the system of worldly policy which you fear is interwoven in my religion, I will not say but in one instance I have erred. Once, indeed, I could have rejoiced to see a mitre on your head, as I make no doubt but many mitred heads were stars in the right hand of Him who walks among the golden candlesticks. But I wish not to see you restored, as you could not with a good conscience. This is not the restoration I intended. But although any mixture of worldly policy is, as you say, an 'ugly symptom,' I trust I have never been influenced by it, to stumble at the true Christ, no more than a partial influence of it in Peter, causing him so far not to savour of the things of God, argues that he had another Christ in view, when he made that confession which was sanctioned by the approbation of his Lord. But, alas! though I cleave too much to the dust, yet I can

in truth say, I never wilfully devised an unscriptural scheme of usefulness. I might have done so from ignorance, but I trust, wherever I have been, or am at present, contrary to the will of our Lord, that he will reveal to me the error into which I have fallen.

"Respecting my zeal, if you knew the truth of the matter, you would consider I am in little danger of mistaking any thing in myself for what I am conscious of being so deficient. I heartily unite with you in prayer (a circumstance I feared I never would have had an opportunity of doing), that the Lord would turn (permit me to say) *our* zeal into a right channel—namely, concern for his truth and his precepts."

To the Same.

"MY DEAR SIR—The limits of my last prevented my adverting to many things in your letter to me. You will, therefore, I hope, not be displeased at my again troubling you on the subject.

"What you mention of Sandeman I shall first attend to. But here, perhaps it is necessary even to caution *you* to avoid that spirit which gladly makes a man an offender for a word; and which is, indeed, so discernible in the admirers of Sandeman. While the purity of truth calls for all zeal and watchful attention, it is inconsistent with its influence to be judging the state of the heart, which is reserved for the judgment of the Lord, and also directly opposed to his express command; but imagine not from this that I feel annoyed by your judging of my state. I can assure you in truth such is not the case, as the judgment of all men on earth is but as the dust of the balance in this respect to me. In proportion as I realize the awful solemnity of giving a personal account unto God, all flesh appears as grass, and the approbation or disapprobation of fellow-mortals, as the idle unimportant noise of the passing wind. Sandeman has

many beauties, and speaks of the simplicity and fulness of the truth, in a manner that must be gratifying and satisfactory to any *unprejudiced* lover of it; but in my opinion he robs that truth of much of its glory, and directs the mind from it to its effects. He, and all who follow him, thus fall into what I conceive to be an error of the Arminian system. However seemingly opposed in the outset, like lines not truly parallel, when sufficiently extended, these two parties ultimately meet in a point. A mind truly awakened (bear with the expression) cannot rest satisfied with generalities; and when not under the influence of contention for hypotheses, it will not fail to put this question—‘Have I indeed an interest in that righteousness which justifies the ungodly?’ I grant this is not the object of inquiry with the Arminian. He asks himself—‘Am I in the favour of God?’ But the end, ‘accepted of God’ is equally the object of both. Now, while Arminianism turns the attention to the performance of conditions to ascertain an interest in the favour of God, Sandeman and his followers turn the attention to the fruits of faith, as the only ground of confidence of their being personally accepted. This appears to me to be nearly the same. The testimony of Jesus, pregnant in itself with all consolation, and in the belief of it, with assurance of personal interest, is equally, in this respect, set at nought by those builders. Can there be peace with God, if there be not consciousness of personal acceptance? Surely St. Paul does not treat in Romans v. 1, of peace in the abstract, but as it also affects the conscience. If not—then the truth *itself*, and not its fruits, nor itself jointly with its fruits, is that which satisfies respecting a personal interest. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.’ It is not being justified by its fruits we ascertain the blessing of which we were before unconscious; but when God reveals his Son in the heart of the believer, the language it adopts is—‘My Lord and my God!’ In the after progress—the trial of faith, its fruits are good and

indispensable, as collateral evidences; and, in my judgment, are only treated as such in the various passages of Scripture, in which they are mentioned as evidences. While, therefore, I am opposed to the "appropriation" of the popular divines, as represented by Sandeman, I am equally so to his *appropriation*. It is argued, no faith without a revelation; and as there is no revelation that our Lord died for A or B, therefore there is no ground in revelation for A or B so to believe. This sophistry, I hope, has not imposed on you; for I trust you have had the witness in yourself that the 'Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,' and that he has not ceased to exercise that power in his being exalted to bestow gifts on the ungodly. It is fruitless to argue with those who have no other ground for a consciousness of a personal interest, but what they imagine are the fruits of faith in them. The name in the white stone they are ignorant of, not having received it; but I doubt not from our former intimate and sweet converse on this subject, that you have known that song—'O Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou dost comfort me. Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid,' &c. You must in this case know, that the sealing of the Spirit is more than a change of conduct, and the Spirit of adoption more than the acknowledgment that God has reconciled sinners to himself—in fact, it conveys to us that he has children, and this in the same way as of old, by the word coming in demonstration, and power, and in *much assurance*. Thus knowing themselves children—as children, they become followers of God—not following him, believing that he has children; but as dear children having received an understanding to know him that is true, and a knowledge of being in him," &c.

A Letter addressed in reply to three persons who consulted him on the propriety of forming a Church on Separating Principles.

“DEAR SIRS—Respecting the question you proposed to me, whether believers meeting on the first day of the week, be not at liberty to administer to each other the Supper of our Lord, or as a Church of Christ, to observe that ordinance; I have heard much on the subject, and have long turned my attention to it. Much has been said respecting an equality in the ordinances, and as it is allowed on all hands that believers when they meet ought to pray and admonish each other, then why not observe the Lord's Supper? In my opinion all ordinances are not in one sense equal. It is a believer's duty to pray in private—to pray in his family—to bless his household as David; but it does not therefore follow that it is his duty to observe the Lord's Supper in his closet, or in his family.

But it may be said that the Lord's Supper is the communion of the body of Christ, which is a church assembled for that purpose, and connected with the head, Christ Jesus, and with each other in this ordinance. This is also granted; but then it is urged—is not the meeting of Christians united to each other a church, before they have an elder ordained over them; and, therefore may they not enjoy this ordinance as a church without such office-bearers? This is certainly putting the question in a very imposing point of view; for if it be answered—No; then it may be said, that we make the office-bearers all things, and the church nothing. But this is not good reasoning, for though office-bearers are not all things, yet they are as truly appointed of God as the ordinance itself; for he has given the one as well as the other in his divine appointment to the church, and it is the duty of Christians not to ‘separate what he has joined together.’ Now if it be as much the duty of an assembly of Christians as a

church to have office-bearers, as it is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, why not be equally anxious to have the one as the other? And as the pastoral office is of divine appointment, and as it is, I believe, granted, that where there is a pastor, it is his province to preside, now does not the command 'do all things decently and in order,' imply that the pastoral office in a church should be first filled before the Lord's Supper be observed? What has been the consequence of not attending to this? Have not all sorts of confusion and division come in as a flood, and might not such be expected, as God expressly declared, that he has ordained those offices in his church to preserve the unity of the body, by keeping the members from being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, or the cunning craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive? But it is said by many in excuse—We have none fit for pastors. Now observe the inconsistency of this. They have none fit for the pastoral office, yet every one of them acts as a pastor—all administer ordinances—all preside—all rule—all do every thing for which Christ ordained different offices, and, by their own confession, for the performance of which not one of them is qualified. May it not then be asked of such characters—'Who hath required those things at your hand?' I judge you out of your own mouth; you do things in my house contrary to my order, and you say at the same time not one of us is qualified. Paul has said—'the body is not one member, but many members, each occupying its own place in the body.' But those men contradict the apostle, and each assumes indiscriminately every office. Each member is with them eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet. Those societies forsooth call themselves churches, and despise all others which are truly walking according to the divine rule: and yet constituted as they are, it is impossible for them to observe the command of Christ to his church—'Let him who ministereth, wait on his ministry'—it is his office, let him attend constantly to it; 'Him that teacheth, on teaching'—that is, let him devote himself unremittingly to the office of teaching; 'him that ruleth with diligence'.

that is, rule with diligence, &c. &c. Why cannot they attend to this command? Because it requires an order and regularity—a fixed appointment to certain duties of certain individuals properly qualified, to which they will not submit. Thus with all their boasting of being imitators of the apostolic churches, they neglect the commands of Christ, and turn the temple of the Lord into a Babel, and the beautiful order God has established into a chaos of discordant principles.”

The following extract expresses briefly Mr. Blest's sentiments on the subject of Infant Baptism. It was written shortly after the birth of a grandson.

“ I have the pleasure of affording your son his first resting-place, which I beg to present. Its form, being that of the ark, reminds us of that wherein Noah and his family were preserved from the flood by Divine appointment. Into this, Noah's children were received from their connexion with him, and saved by the waters of the flood. And an apostle, when the Christian church was formed and matured, said—“ The like figure whereunto baptism saves us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, &c. I mention this as evidence that at that (comparatively) advanced period, Peter did not once suppose that there was an individual admitted into the visible church, young or old, who was not a participant of a like figure ; consequently the foolish supposition (for nothing more is pretended) that the observance of that ordinance is superfluous, (for it is granted that it is innocent,) is manifestly inconclusive and unscriptural. But I only touch slightly, where I could demonstrate. I know baptism is nothing but an ordinance of God, just as circumcision or uncircumcision is nothing. But while I oppose all human regulations or ordinances, I bow in deference to Divine wisdom to every institution which bears the seal of ‘ Thus saith the Lord.’ Nor would I give

up the heart-cheering privilege of dedicating my offspring to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in that ordinance for a world. Permitted as a Christian parent to bring my child unto the good shepherd, not all the sophistry of men, deference to the opinion of mortals, or consistency of system, should rob me of the joy resulting from such a privilege. He that teacheth men to break the least of his commandments is least indeed "

The following extracts are selected from a Letter written to the Rev. Wm. Henry, Missionary at Tahiti, whom Mr. Blest had known in early life, as an inhabitant of Stigo, and connected with him by marriage.

"I am what I have ever been—a catholic. I know no man after the flesh, and the most of the distinctions which divide the church of Christ are nothing better. O guard against this leaven in the isles of the Pacific. Teach the people that ordinances and church regulations have no importance but in their relationship to Him who is exclusively 'the way, the truth, and the life.' I must digress. What a clamour you make about baptism! What a manifestation of the wisdom from beneath in waiting to commence with the baptism of the king! What a mysterious veil you throw over the Lord's Supper! What drilling for a participation in those ordinances! A work of grace felt and experienced! Alas! how different the proceedings of the apostles. They lifted up the standard—proclaimed a free and immediate approach to all who professed to believe their report, and gave evidence of their desire to enter into a state of discipleship; and their converts were, without further preliminaries or questions, baptized, and, as far as I can perceive, when organised and collected into congregations, were admitted to the Lord's table. None of your Tahitians could manifest more the remaining influence of corruption than we find in those admitted by the apostles or their deputies into the primitive church. All, of course, were baptized, and none of your candidates (a

bad word, for it is not consistent with that immediate approach which the Gospel warrants,) can be more ignorant of the Lord's Supper than the Corinthian communicants. But the old leaven 'purity of communion,' the pharisaical watchword of Separatists, Baptists, and almost every sect which has adopted this delusive principle, has long operated on the minds of those who fancy they can produce a *field without tares*. A consummation never to be realised, until this world shall have been consumed, and a new earth shall have arisen out of its ashes by the creating fiat of Him who maketh all things new.

The early treatment of a brother, who wished to marry a heathen at a time when obtaining a Christian partner was impossible, was, I think, deeply erroneous. Marrying in the Lord, as well as eating the shew-bread exclusively by the priesthood, are in the nature of things subject to circumstances. Our Lord has decided, that those to whom the gift of continency is not given should marry: and if nature or constitution strongly enforce this remedy, and circumstances do not permit it to be attended to as a duty in accordance with a positive precept, the latter is superseded by the moral obligation. In the one case David ate and was blameless, and in the other, a person marries and is equally so. Otherwise marriage must be founded in grace.

Permit me now to say a word on the probable results of the influence which you and your missionary brethren possess over the people, whom you have been instrumental in rescuing from midnight darkness and barbarism. Convinced of your superior wisdom and information, from having proved the utility of your instructions in husbandry and mechanics, they bow in implicit confidence to your every dictate. Encouraged by this experience, and in a religious deference to your character, they have sacrificed their prejudices and customs in willingly promising obedience to the laws you have enacted to regulate their conduct as members of society. So far your influence has been happily directed—but take care;—episcopacy in its most corrupt form—that is, when it out-topped the throne,

and monopolized the exercise of all the power of the civil magistrate—has sprung from this influence over barbarous nations brought to profess Christianity. Guard against this evil in time."

"Encourage them indeed to seek the law at the mouth of the priest, but direct them to the powers that are of God, for temporal jurisdiction. Mark the distinction, and keep them separate and independent of each other. 'Rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'"

To the Rev. Thomas Kelly, Rossanna, Ashford.

"29th August, 1820.

"MY DEAR SIR—You may well have been surprised at my silence since the receipt of your last favour. The truth is, I put off from day to day my purpose of writing, in expectation that I might enjoy more leisure than has since offered, to enable me to write to you a long letter. But as the correspondence, &c. &c. connected with the business of the schools daily accumulate, I despair of being able to effect my purpose; and, therefore, I am under the necessity of writing more briefly than I would wish.

"The expression in the close of my letter, to which you refer, was the result of a passing reflection, originating in my fear, that it was not likely that you would visit these parts; and that your attention for some years back to subjects connected with the restoration of the supposed order of the primitive churches, had given a locality to your labours, inconsistent with that prominent and leading station in the direction of the general concerns of the Redeemer's cause in this kingdom, which I ever considered you had been raised up eminently to fill. This, and not any impressions made on my mind by reports to your prejudice, gave birth to the observation which, if it have occasioned a moment's uneasiness in your mind, I most sincerely regret having made.

“With respect to any reports to your prejudice I can safely say, if any such have ever existed, they have never reached my ears. I am indeed happily removed from all intercourse with such, to whose spirit ‘biting and devouring’ are most congenial. The church here, of which I am a member, has been happily purged of this leaven, and our dear brethren in the Established Church, with whom I principally associate, and in whose society I am most in my element, though personally unknown to you, love you most sincerely for the truth’s sake. I may also add, that among the very many evangelical ministers of the Establishment with whom I have conversed, I never, on the mention of your name, perceived the least indication of any thing inconsistent with feelings of brotherly affection towards you. If calumnies have gone forth, they have originated in that uncharitable spirit, which, with true party zeal, seeks to unchristianize all who dare to dispute their infallible decisions. That your feelings towards all who love our Lord Jesus Christ are such as you state, I never, for a moment, entertained a doubt. Indeed I have frequently observed, to such of my friends as lamented that you approximated too nearly to what is called marked separation, that I was conscious you never could be a separatist. And the correctness of the judgment confirms me more and more in the truth of the sentiment on which the conclusion I had made was founded—and that is, being imbued with the spirit of that party is not to be attributed so much to the exercise of the judgment, as to the state and disposition of the affections. A cold heart may rest willingly in a state of exile from the people of God; but such as are taught of God to love all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be robbed of the luxury of Christian intercourse by all the sophisms of my much lamented friend Mr. Walker.

“Speaking, however, on this subject, I cannot consistently with your call on my candour, omit mentioning that the scruple you entertain on the subject of praying in a mixed assembly is a shred of that system of which I would rejoice to see you entirely stripped. May I go still further.

Is the order of what are called the churches which have had their birth in the discoveries of our day, really scriptural? Are they 'fac similes' of the primitive churches? and, as it is presumed, exhibitions of the unity of the body of Christ? Are they not rather as to their form, distorted caricatures, in which an imitation of what was extraordinary in the former is substituted for that which was to be ordinary in the latter, to the total exclusion of what was ordinary in the former, and in the very nature of things intended as a standing ordinary regulation, and essential to the promotion of the grand object in view, in the original constitution of the Christian church. Thus, an imitation of the services of the apostolic age, which were the effects of divine appointment and immediate inspiration, has superseded the pastoral office; robbing those concerned of the benefit of an institution with which the legitimate purposes of Christian associations are connected by divine appointment, to the subversion of edification, unity, Christian subordination, and that identity of office so prominent in the apostolic churches.

"I should not have entered on this subject, as I have not time to discuss it fully, even were my thoughts less crude. I have, however, though very confusedly, given you my sentiments on it. But notwithstanding what is so confidently assumed, that in their order, there is an exhibition of the unity of the body of Christ, I must confess, *that as I behold more of the lineaments of the primitive church in the Establishment*, so, in the union of the evangelical party in that communion, I behold the brightest exhibition of the unity of those who are one in Christ Jesus. Their's is a union which forces itself on the attention of the world—the testimony that God has given of his Son, the character of his salvation, the oneness of their hope, and the source and nature of that affection to each other which they profess and manifest. Whereas, the world can behold in the constrained union of the associations to which I allude, nothing but a zealous attachment to the peculiarities of party, or the subordinate distinctions by which they differ from each other.

"I would feel exceedingly happy to correspond with you on the subjects connected with the foregoing hints, and to submit to your consideration some ideas which I entertain, and which, if correct, would go far to invalidate the conclusion so confidently deduced from the assumed principle, that personal conversion is necessary to church membership, and that all religious establishments must be antichristian. But the volumes of letters I am obliged to write, and the intense application every department of the great work to which I have been mercifully called, perfectly enervates me; and, when I find a moment's leisure, it is absolutely necessary for my health, to devote it to exercise on horseback. These, however, I may briefly mention, have arisen from the evidence which the New Testament furnishes of the extension of the privileges of the kingdom of God to the *Gentile world*, as fully enjoyed by the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. Not considering them *as converts*, but as Gentiles—for their admission into the church of God, on personal conversion to the God of Abraham, was known to all generations, and the mode of admission as such, provided for in the law, and could not consequently be that mystery hidden for ages which the apostle magnifies so much. But if the whole gentile world were brought near by the blood of Christ, in the same sense the apostle uses the term in application to the Jews: this was a mystery indeed hidden for ages, which, while it would justify the incorporation of a nation as an institution for religious worship and instruction, would lay the axe to the root of much, if not all, which has multiplied divisions and unguarded strife in our day.

"I conclude, my dear sir, with praying with my whole heart, that you and yours may be blessed with all the richness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that your mind may be comforted in all your trials, and your health renewed for the happy labour of many years.—Amen.

"Yours, with true gratitude, affection, and respect,

"ALBERT BLEST."

To the Rev. Thomas Kelly, Athy.

“9th December, 1823.

“MY VERY DEAR SIR—Your being the first to allude to a subject which, as far as my acquaintance with polemical writings extends, has not been hitherto viewed in the light of its own importance, if not altogether overlooked, constrains me to communicate to you the views of it which first occurred to me more than a year since, and which I have since seen no reason to change.

“I refer to the sentiment expressed in the eleventh page of your letter to the Roman Catholics of Athy, second edition, (which only reached my hands a few days since.) *The new covenant knows no priest but Jesus Christ.* Alas! to what can we attribute the darkness which has hitherto hidden from Christian eyes a truth so abundantly revealed, and so superlatively important—a truth so essential to the scriptural import of the Gospel, and to the purity of its profession, that to a departure from it may be traced the rise of the man of sin; and that in the development of the whole system of antichristian assumptions and delusions, this awful departure will be found to be the seminal principle of all the abominations which make desolate?

“What is the Gospel? A full development of the unsearchable riches of Christ. This, God preached in paradise, and prophets sung until ‘the Desire of all nations’ appeared, clothed with flesh in Bethlehem. In his personal ministry, while he sojourned below, his every word, his every action, the whole spirit which he breathed, had a teaching voice, proclaiming him full of grace and truth, a Saviour mighty to save the lost.

“After his resurrection and ascension, endowed with power from on high, his chosen witnesses unravelled the mystery of his life, death, and resurrection; connecting the whole with the great object, his reign at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. His vicarious obedience, even unto the death, was but preparatory to the glory which was

to follow, when all power in heaven and on earth being consequently placed in his hands, he was to reign a king and a priest, governing his church, and dispensing gifts to the ungodly, that God the Lord might dwell among them in their hearts by faith, and in their affections as a governing principle, subduing them to himself.

"The great object of the labours of the apostles was to lead men to a risen Saviour, exalted to bless without qualification in the subject, or limits, other than their wants and the infinite riches of his own grace; and to demonstrate that every blessing the guilty, the polluted, and the lost required, was treasured up in him—and all this for the satisfaction of the awakened conscience, and as essential to the full assurance of the understanding of the faith and hope which was connected with the Saviour's priesthood, its incommunicable nature, its efficacy, and its perpetuity.

"Thus the church was betrothed as a chaste virgin unto Christ. Christian experience was, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'—'Christ within the believer the hope of glory.' The Christian course—the life of faith was looking unto Jesus. Every subtle device of the enemy to introduce another object to the attention of faith, or the hope of the Christian, met with apostolic frown and the anathema of heaven. The darkness was past—whether delusion, as originating in the wisdom of the world that knew not God, or in the veil of the shadowy and typical ritual of the Levitical economy, and the Sun of Righteousness had arisen; but, alas! the church, as Eden, was marred by the wiles of Satan. The spirit of Antichrist appeared, and although, as respected the completion of the character, Antichrist was still to come, the participation of its spirit too truly indicated that many Antichrists existed, even in the apostolic day. This at once struck at the purity of the faith and its influence on the mind; resisting the former by the instrumentality of Judaizing teachers, and the latter by that of teachers or professors whose doctrines ministered to the spirit of the world—'the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life'—the two grand con-

stituents of the character of antichrist when fully grown, and both equally hostile to the apostolic word.

“ ‘They hear not’ was the watchword of John, which antipathy grew with its growth, until, in its maturity, it boldly proclaimed that the word of God was not the alone ground of Christian faith and the rule of Christian practice; but he that letteth did let, until heathen domination was removed, and the general profession of Christianity gave its ministers importance, and the absence of Christian principles from the profession and its being saturated with the spirit of the world, facilitated the gradual completion of the character long foretold—the antichrist which was to come. The exhibition of this monster in the church was to be promoted by all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and the whole of his claims to supremacy and absolute dominion over the consciences of men in an entire subjection to which he was recognised, as ‘sitting in the temple of God,’ was to be effected by a LIE (2 Thes. ii. 11); an assumption at once false and subversive of Christianity. This was the change of the priesthood. The LIE is, that Jesus appointed Peter the head of the church; Peter the Pope of Rome; and by this transfer, the whole hierarchy of Rome participating in the fulness derived from their head, became priests after the order of Melchizedec.

“ The priesthood is therefore the antichrist, and the belief of the lie, the assumed transfer; the faith of Rome, the denial of the truth; the manifestation of pleasure in unrighteousness, the presage of destruction (2 Thes. ii. 12). The falsehood of the assumption is very clearly demonstrated in the nature of the order in which Christ was constituted a priest. He had no predecessor, nor did he admit of any successor; being, by the constitution of God, a priest for ever, and by his nature, incapable of becoming defunct. ‘He ever liveth,’ and consequently, as he cannot abdicate his office, but abideth a priest continually, there was no place for succession. When Satan had achieved this wonder, he might in opposition to our Lord, boast that he had made all things new: for it was not a corruption of Christianity,

but a system exclusively his work, in full and direct opposition to it in its foundation and superstructure—in all and in every part Antichristian. Jesus, the high priest, constituted of God—enthroned above the heavens, to whom the apostolic testimony exclusively and incessantly directed men; being removed from the eyes of mortals, and the hope of immediate access to God through him, as the one mediator, being taken away by this lie: they were directed to another object, supposed to be invested with the plenitude of his authority, namely, the priesthood. Jesus is a priest for ever, “of whom, and to whom, and through whom, are all things;” and when his priesthood is superseded, there must of necessity be a change of the law. Popery is, in this respect, consistent. Every spiritual blessing emanates from its priesthood, and as its root is falsehood and delusion; so are all its branches and fruit, death. The law of the Levitical priesthood was typical, and tending to bondage, and labouring in birth of good things to come. The law of the priesthood of Jesus was the unclouded manifestation of truth, spirit, life, and peace—good things present. The law connected with Popery has for its motto, not only ‘the glory is departed,’ but ‘the glory is renounced.’ It has gilded its falsehood with epithets characteristic of the items which constitute the treasury of heaven, in order the better to oppose the truth and delude its votaries. It has its sacrifices—its atonement—its purifications—its rule of faith—its intercessors, &c. &c.—all in subversion of the privileges connected with the priesthood of Jesus. The Holy Scriptures which testify of Jesus are taken away, and traditions, decretals, acts of councils, &c., which testify of the Romish priesthood are substituted. The one offering of Jesus, whereby He for ever perfected all who are sanctified, is removed; the daily sacrifice of the mass is provided as the means of reconciliation; and his intercession as the one mediator is cancelled by a transfer of the office to saints and angels. But I must conclude by remarking, that if you transfer exclusively to the Saviour all the credence, reliance, and subjection due by the people

to the Romish priesthood, you will, as taught by Popery, then have what Christianity inculcates. Does it not therefore follow, that the Romish system claims what Christ demands, and is thereby constituted the man of sin?

"If you have obtained from this confused sketch, my general idea, the object I had in view in taking up my pen is answered. I request you will turn your attention to it, and when leisure permits, let me have the pleasure of hearing from you.

"I remain, my dear sir, your affectionate, obliged, and respectful servant,

"ALBERT BLEST."

A Letter explanatory of his doctrinal sentiments.

"DEAR SIR—I had not leisure or opportunity to reply to yours of the 20th ultimo until now. Give me leave to mention an impropriety in your expression twice repeated—'conforming to your doctrine.' The doctrine is not mine—the truths I have been led to embrace are the truths of God; conforming to any man's doctrine, is no more than becoming the servant of man. The apostles themselves were jealous of persons receiving their views from any respect to them as men or teachers; they were anxious to betroth believers as chaste virgins unto Christ, and took every pains that 'their faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,'—that is, that those who attended their ministry, and seemed to receive their word, should not do so in consequence of esteeming them wise men, as the various pupils of the heathen philosophers had respect to the sentiments of their teachers, from an opinion of their superior wisdom, but that their profession and attachment to the Gospel should be from a demonstration to their understanding that it was the truth of God, the revelation of his will: and not the word of man. You seem

also to think that those views are dissenting principles : but they are not, they are as much the doctrines of the Established Church as of any dissenting body, and they are also the leading features of the confessional articles of all the reformed churches, and in accordance with the thirty-nine articles ; so that every minister who does not preach them is a dissenter from the articles he has subscribed, though he fills the pulpit and enjoys the emoluments of the Established Church. This I only mention—it is of no consequence. Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother of all believers ; they know no man or party after the flesh, they can recognise each other, receive and love each other, for the truth's sake dwelling in them, being all one in Christ Jesus, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, and I may say agreeably to the spirit of the passage, neither churchman nor dissenter. Neither do we (as you say we are charged) deny repentance, nor confide in our faith as a means essential to salvation. Repentance is a change of mind which invariably accompanies the belief of the truth, and flows from it : so that unless this is found to be the state of the mind, all is nought ; there is no belief of the truth, no change of mind. Such professors are still dead in trespasses and sins. This repentance or change of mind manifests itself respecting different subjects presented to the mind, according to their agreement with, or opposition to, the mind of God. For instance, the renewed mind hates sin, and truly deplors its influence on the individual so changed. Why ? because viewing the divinity and loveliness of the truth of the Gospel which it believes, it hates every principle which hides its beauty from the eyes of deluded men, and makes God a liar ; it hates sin as hateful in itself, and opposed to the will and nature of God. Hence true repentance is continual, without intermission, because the new mind must ever perceive the existence of error and sin in others ; and while in the body, must ever have reason to mourn over a want of full conformity to the perfect standard of divine truth and purity. Poor deluded religionists strive to work themselves into an agony of grief for sin, and endeavour to stir up their

passions to shed a few tears of what they call contrition; and this they think repentance. Having attained it, their delusion is sealed—they sleep the sleep of death; but not so the believer. He finds the fulfilment of that promise ‘With weeping and supplication I will lead them; they shall loathe themselves in their own sight, and never open their mouths because of their sins, when I am reconciled to them.’ This repentance, flowing from reconciliation, is deep, sincere, affectionate, and free from terror; for it is accompanied with peace and joy in believing—rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh. We do not confide in our faith more than in our works; we confide in, and rely on, the great object—Jesus Christ and him crucified. I go over a field, I discover a treasure, which is sufficient to pay my debts, clothe and support me in the comfortable enjoyment of life all my days; what is the source of my confidence, my joy, my ease, and peace of mind? Why, not merely believing that I have found a treasure, but the possession of the treasure itself; my belief will neither pay my debt, clothe, nor feed me, but my treasure will. Just so, all who have discovered ‘the treasure hidden in the field,’ rejoice and confide only in it. They find Jesus as their justification, paying their debt and clothing them with that righteousness which is unto all and upon all them who believe. There is no difference, all equally need it; and it is that alone in which all men equally stand for acceptance. They find in this treasure a remedy for the maladies of the mind. Christ by his quickening Spirit is their life, their guide, their sanctifier, their strength; thus they are clothed, comforted, and preserved by their treasure. It is true, they never would have enjoyed it, except they had discovered it: but now that it is discovered, it becomes their enjoyment and support. Read Isaiah xii. Finding Jehovah to be salvation, gives peace, gives joy, gives triumph. I cannot enlarge; and it is probable, I am so pressed for time, and so fatigued with writing, that I may not again have leisure to enter fully into the matter.”

To the Rev. Charles Seymour.

" November 30, 1815.

" MY DEAR SIR—Why is it that I never have a line from you? Have you no good news to impart? Is it winter in the spiritual as well as in the natural world? I trust not, I trust your bow abides in strength, or is rather stronger or firmer by age, to direct the arrows of divine truth with a more unerring aim, to wound the enemies of the King, and cause them to bow before him, and gladly wear the fetters of his love. Oh, for more of those holy soul-refreshing triumphs! Blessed be God we who are brought into immediate contact with his work by the schools, and follow after in His progress through the dark regions where Satan hitherto swayed an uncontrolled sceptre, have, from time to time, our hearts refreshed with the wonders of His power, and join the shout of angels on beholding deserters fly from the ranks of the enemy to vie with the cross bearers in crowning Jesus Lord of all.

" These, my dear friend, are not the ravings of fancy—they are happily realised. Every day I hear of good doing by the Gospel, as written in the sacred page, and transcribed by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of some; and often do I wonder at the difference, the manifest difference, which appears between those converted in this way, where divine truth passes immediately from the apostolic testimony into the heart; and those who have been benefitted by the same truths, but mediately. The latter generally have their gold dimmed by the touch of the hand through which it passes, whereas the former shines with the brilliancy of gold dropped from the mint. John Bunyan says, all the cart-loads of sermons that have ever been thrown into the slough of Despond, have never yet so filled it, as to prevent pilgrims from plunging to the neck. But how is it that the host of travellers in the days of the apostles, have almost all left it out of their charts of the country through which they passed. Doubtless because they had better guides with them.

There was no 'yea nor nay,' no 'lo here! nor lo there!' 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' saved a world of trouble and soul distress, and hence from all guided by their pastoral staff, we hear more of the voice of rejoicing than of weeping and lamentation, more of 'I believe and am sure,' than 'I fear after all I cannot think that I am a child,' &c. If I forget not, it was after Christian had entered within the gates of the city, of which he had, when he set out, but an indistinct view, that his burden dropped off before the cross; and this model has been too closely followed to the bewildering of many. Not so in apostolic conversion, the cross was the first object they presented—this standard they unfurled; and animated and allured by the sight, the multitude became followers of them and of the Lord. Happily the apostolic testimony is now blessed to the production of the same glorious effects. Roman Catholics ignorant of every human model of divine truth, take the impression from the original; and believing, at once enter into rest. Of this, had I space and time, I could give you many pleasing instances; but I sat down to write a letter of business, and have been insensibly led into a digression. Yet once more I must digress before I come to the point. Do you remember a very old pauper, upwards of one hundred years of age, that you spoke to while you were here in my absence. After my return, being told of your conversation with him, when he next called I renewed the subject, and from the attention he paid and the interest he seemed to feel, even on our first meeting, I had good reason to conclude that our Lord had caused the seed you had sown to take root. He frequently repeated his visits; and it would rejoice your heart to see how eagerly he drank of the waters of life, his poor languid eye catching a new lustre as he listened, while the emaciated skeleton sounded an approach to the valley of dry bones—the house appointed for all living. He died rejoicing in the truth."

To an early convert from Popery.

“Sligo, Jan. 30, 1816.

“MY DEAR FRIEND—I received your sundry favours from Liverpool and London, &c., and would have written to you more than once, but I waited for a frank. This letter goes under cover to Mr. Mills. I shall be always glad to hear from you, as I wish fully to know your progress, and every incident connected with your situation. I was happy to hear of your safe arrival, and of the kindness shown you in Dublin, Liverpool, and London. My dear friend, I have but one wish for you, and that is, that ‘you may be preserved, body, soul, and spirit,’ until our Lord calls you hence. This is connected with the glory of Him who has called you from darkness into light, and with every tender feeling of those who love you for the truth’s sake; and very especially with the honour and credit of the society which has been, in the hands of God, the blessed instrument of rescuing you from the power of Satan. You now appear ultimately connected with their work in Ireland. The English have heard much, and they have not heard the one half of the good done by the society—of the many converted by their means; but until your arrival, none has been exhibited as a sample of their labours, or as a proof of the reality of their reports. Every eye will therefore be on you; and one false step will sink the society in public estimation, and lead to the conclusion, that all the boasted good said to be done was overcharged misrepresentation. Thus religion will be wounded in the house of her friends; but this is not all—if through your means the society sink in public estimation, you will be involved in the guilt of stopping the good work here, and leaving your poor deluded countrymen to perish in their sins and delusions, unpitied and unregarded. The apostle’s affectionate address to his spiritual children is mine to you—‘Stand fast in the Lord, dearly beloved,’ and again he says, ‘Now we live if you stand fast,’ as much as to say, if you waver—if you fall—

your lapse is our death. Blessed be God, of all who have enrolled themselves on the side of the Lord from the beginning of the society's labours, I have been hitherto preserved from having cause to mourn over a single individual who has belied the profession he has made, or brought reflection on the religion of the gospel. May my soul be refreshed with good news about you, that you stand immovable and irreproachable, abounding in the work of the Lord—growing in grace—knowledge, devotedness, and in every acquirement connected with usefulness. Christians, however, favoured with religious education and moral discipline before their conversion, and though accustomed to the habits of sobriety; chastity and every amiable disposition, have nevertheless much to guard against; the view they have of their own hearts, when He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, causes it to shine into their minds, will ever keep them looking to Jesus for help and deliverance from themselves, the enemy who seeks to devour them, and the evil of this world. How much more it behoves you to look to him who alone can create a new heart and renew a right spirit within you; educated as you were without one truly religious idea, and sunk in the habits of vice. O, my dear sir, remember that, as you have been brought to believe that the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not your own merit, must be your justification, you ought to live under the daily impression, that he, and he exclusively, is truly made of God, sanctification by the indwelling of his Spirit in the souls of all who believe; thereby discovering every evil propensity, and enabling to hate and war against them, and to come off more than conquerors, by bringing every thought and imagination in subjection to himself. He is thus as truly the sanctification of all who believe as he is their righteousness by which alone they stand complete. Take, therefore, for your motto, "looking unto Jesus," let this sound in your ears at all times and under all circumstances. Remember he is our life; our every action not done in him, and by him, are dead works. Weigh the apostle's exhortation—"stand fast in the Lord"—no stability but in him—all are fleeting bubbles be-

sides. Our prayers—our resolutions are all but stubble before the fire of evil propensities or temptation. Your eye once turned from him as your life—your strength—your all, your iniquities, like a resistless storm, will sweep you away—blast the bud of your profession, and cover you with mountains of guilt. Remember that in all things God glorifies his Son, and him only. Hence he has had the honour of bringing in the everlasting righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe—quickening the dead in trespasses and sins—creating them after his own image—and being the life, supporter and preserver of that new creation. In a few words, learn what Jesus is, and you learn all; and will be all, that is necessary to the praise of the glory of his grace.”

“The Holy Bible is a divine revelation addressed to the understanding of men, in which God makes known his own character as the thrice Holy God, immutably just, and yet infinitely merciful. To display these attributes of Deity in their glory and harmony, and to manifest them to the understandings of the sons of men, so as to remove their natural ignorance of God, to enable them to approach him with confidence, as a God of mercy, without disparagement of his justice, and thereby to turn their affections from the pursuit of sin to a complacency in his character, as the God of all grace, is its great object, and is in epitome the substance of the Bible.

“The Old Testament, besides its historical narratives, (which are all in connexion with the grand subject of salvation,) discovers the evil nature and awful consequences of sin; and in typical representations, and prophetic intimations, sets forth the salvation of God, in the person and work of the promised Messiah. Moses, the penman of the Pentateuch, wrote of him, and to him give *all* the prophets witness.

“The New Testament contains the gospels—the acts of

the apostles—the epistles—and a prophetic revelation to St. John. The gospels comprise the discourses, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus of Nazareth; evincing that he was the promised Messiah of God. No person can become acquainted with the true character of Jesus, but such as derive it from this source. To become a Christian, a man must be a disciple of the evangelists. As a disciple he must sit at their feet, learn from them the principles of faith in Christ, see through their eyes and hear with their ears. Every word spoken by the Saviour—every miracle he performed—every disposition he evinced—every thing which he suffered—and the manifestation of his divine nature in raising himself from the dead, have a teaching voice; proclaiming his divine power and Godhead and suitability, as the Saviour of the guilty, the polluted and the lost.

“What the apostles heard and witnessed, and, under the divine influence, understood, formed their judgment of the character and work of Jesus. This was the ground of their faith in his name; and what they heard and witnessed they also wrote for the express purpose of communicating the same knowledge, which they possessed, to others, who might behold, as they did, the glory of Jesus, as a Saviour full of grace, and truth; and so believing have life in his name. The knowledge of the character and work of Jesus as a Saviour, must be derived from the writings of the apostles, in order to participate with them in their faith; and such have precisely the same faith of the apostles, being derived from the same source.

“The Acts of the Apostles is the history of the Christian church, from the resurrection of Jesus until the imprisonment of Paul at Rome.

“The letters of the apostles addressed to particular churches, reveal the faith derived from the details given by the evangelists of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour; together with its application to the refutation of every opposing error in doctrine and practice, and for the inculcation of every Christian duty: so that the man of God

may stand complete, grounded and settled in the full assurance of understanding, and thoroughly furnished for every good work.

"The Revelation made to St. John is a prophetic vision, embracing the history of the church in all ages to the end of the world, and its final triumph over death and the grave. In it is foretold the rise and progress of the great apostasy, under the assumption of exclusive Christianity—its nature, duration, extent, and final destruction."

To the Rev. J. C. Lloyd, New Ross.

"7th February, 1820.

"REV. SIR—Your letter of the 2nd instant, which I only received last Saturday evening, afforded me much satisfaction. The account given of the formation of the Bible Association in New Ross, in the Hibernian Bible Society's circular for December last, had strongly directed my Christian affection to the advocates of the Bible there. And the sentiments delivered on that occasion, gave me the most pleasing hope, that when the London Hibernian Society could extend their labours to that county, they would have in the members of your association, the co-operation of those who duly appreciate the importance of the dissemination of an unadulterated Gospel: from being themselves the subjects of its happy influence.

"Your letter communicated the pleasing information that actuated by the principles and views which gave birth to the London Hibernian Society, you have, yourselves, without foreign assistance, commenced the blessed work of seeking to carry into the putrid mass of the great population with which you are surrounded, that sovereign restorative, 'Divine truth.' Before I come to the immediate subject of your letter, I think it my duty to intimate, that the society for which I have the honour to act, will afford your association every assistance in their power to aid in your labour

of love—whether in connexion with you, extending their labours to your county—or should you prefer acting as a separate institution, by affording you our regulations, the occasional services of our inspectors, Irish readers and teachers, and our elementary books at a reduced price : on which subject I may expect to hear from you, when convenient.

“ You have been rightly informed that the society has been favoured with success, in preserving under instruction in their schools, the children of Roman Catholics. This they had succeeded in to a degree (taking into consideration the determined opposition given to the measure from the beginning by their priests), which demonstrates the work to be of the Lord ; and, notwithstanding the whole combined movements of that hierarchy, with all their influence to withdraw from us every Roman Catholic child, I believe I do not exaggerate in saying, that within this year the society has had in their schools, near 40,000 children of Roman Catholic parents : nor, do I fear (encouraged as I am by a retrospect of the marvellous interpositions of the divine goodness in support of the institution from the beginning), that the present combination of all their power in opposition to us, will impede our progress. Indeed, from the intimate acquaintance of the state of religion in this kingdom, which I have had for forty years past, and from the disappointment that has uniformly attended every attempt to benefit the great mass of the Popish population by a preached Gospel, and also taking into consideration the ignorance and prejudices of the people, and the fell influence of the spiritual domination to which they are in such abject subjection, I am fully convinced that the evils which affect the population of the country, can never be remedied in any other way than that pursued by the London Hibernian Society. To this, in sovereign mercy, Providence has led, and its adaptation to the state and circumstances of the people, together with the signal success which has favoured the attempt from the beginning, strongly mark that it is in this way the Healer of the nations means

to bring health and a cure to Ireland. Fully to develop the method of our procedure, would be to give you the history of the society for more than ten years past. You have an epitome of the whole, including the line pursued and the results which followed in Gal. vi. 9. However, I shall, in a few observations, briefly communicate those general rules, which, in my opinion, are essential to the prosperity of all schools instituted for the benefit of the poor in this kingdom.

“First—Due attention must be paid to the object which induces the lower order to seek to have their children educated; and this is not merely acquiring the art of reading, but such other acquirements as may enable them to rise in life. Writing a good hand, and being expert accountants; so qualified, they hope their offspring may not participate in the degradation and suffering they themselves have had to endure, but may become dealers in small articles of traffic, get into the employment of the great as land stewards, &c., or obtain the minor or more respectable situations in warehouses and offices of mercantile men. Regulations to afford the pupils these advantages, must be prominently conspicuous in the arrangements made for conducting the schools: otherwise they will be deprived of that feeling of interest in the schools, which, in the first instance, can be the only stimulus to opposition, on their part, to the commands of their clergy, to withdraw their children.

“Second—As permitting their children to attend the school is a sacrifice on the part of the poor, the regulations must be such as to insure the full and profitable occupation of their time, while at school: so that they may obtain the utmost possible proficiency in a given time. In this respect, free schools should excel those schools where the parents of the pupils pay for their education. Our regulations, which fix the progress to be made by each class in the quarter, and proportion the remuneration to the teachers by the proficiency of the pupils, have had the happiest effect, not only in preserving the society from imposition, but in raising the character of the schools in

the judgment of those concerned, and the result has frequently been, not only that the parents, who are able to pay, prefer paying our teachers to their having them taught elsewhere; but the priests who have been goaded to set up free schools in opposition to ours, and which were at first filled with deserters from us, have soon had the mortification to see them deserted, and the pupils return under instruction where they were sure to be sedulously attended to.

“Third—The prejudices of the people must be attended to, and every concession made short of the sacrifice of the great object. They are prejudiced in favour of Roman Catholic teachers: these the London Hibernian Society freely grants under peculiar circumstances. Our regulations securing the exclusion of all books but those of the society from the school; the daily and constant reading of the Holy Scriptures, and the committing of them to memory by all the readers; also by connecting due attention to all those regulations on the part of the master, with his remuneration on the day of the quarterly inspection—all the evil is obviated which might be dreaded from the employment of Roman Catholic teachers; and thus guarded, we care not if the master be a bigoted papist, and the visiter a priest. It is a good saying of one of old—‘Let me fill the bushel with wheat, and I care not for the efforts of those who wish to introduce the chaff.’ Employing Roman Catholic masters duly qualified, has had a happy effect on the parents and on the individuals so employed. Fear of party design on the part of the patrons of the schools is thus removed, and the opposition given to such teachers by the priests, generally impress the parents with the conviction that the priests are actuated by sinister designs; and with respect to the masters themselves, the result has been frequently most blessed, for they are sure not to be admitted to the rites of the church if they do not give up their situations. The conviction the teachers soon acquire, that the books are good, and that nothing but the best interest of the pupils

is intended by their employers, lessens their persecutors in their esteem, and weakens that idolatrous veneration in which they viewed them before: besides the very suspicion of heresy under which they at first read the Bible, makes them more observant of its contents. Very few of them, in a short time, retain their prejudices; and where the Word has not ultimately a saving effect, the indistinct light they acquire, destroys their bigotry, and leaves them indifferent to the principal views of their party.

“Fourth—Perseverance in every effort to maintain a school, when once opened. In this is included due attention to bring the parents to a sense of the advantages of the school—the real motives which actuate its opponents, and the irreparable injury they do their offspring in depriving them of the advantage. It would be necessary also to support the master, while he proves himself deeply interested in regaining his pupils, during a period sufficient to ascertain whether restoration of the school be practicable; and on this head I may add, that where all efforts for its permanent establishment seem to fail, it should be again re-opened, when the people manifest a conviction of their error, and promise not again to withdraw their children.

“Fifth—I will close with a rule of procedure, which I doubt not will be duly appreciated by you and your associates in the good work; and that is, implicit confidence in the promises of Him who cannot lie, and who has said, that the Man of Sin shall be consumed by the Spirit of his mouth, and shall be destroyed with the brightness of his coming.—I remain, rev. sir, your respectful and affectionate servant,

“ALBERT BLEST.”

POSTSCRIPT.

THE LATE REV. JOHN BURKE.

SINCE this memoir has been sent to the press, the author was truly concerned to hear that the above-named clergyman had entered into the rest prepared for the people of God. He was a truly excellent minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, and a warm friend of the London Hibernian Society, who sacrificed his advancement in the church, at an early age, by an undeviating adherence to the cause of scriptural education. Mr. Blest thus alludes to him, in a letter to the Archbishop of Tuam, dated January 6, 1820:—

“I am happy to have an opportunity of bearing my testimony to the truly Christian zeal of the Rev. John Burke, curate of Loughrea. From the commencement of the society’s operations, this gentleman, rejoicing in the means thus afforded him of disseminating the word of God among a population so ignorant, and so unhappily circumstanced as to be precluded from the benefit of his personal ministry, devoted himself entirely to the good work; and it is to his cordial co-operation, that the establishment of most of our schools, to the present day, in the county of Galway, is to be attributed. I feel that I ought to mention, likewise, to your Grace, that through the powerful

interference of popish influence, he lost the promised presentation to a valuable parish, for this conscientious adherence to Christian duty."

Mr. Burke continued faithful to the interests of the London Hibernian Society; and, in the autumn of the last year, travelled in company with Captain John Banks, R.N., and his assistant secretary, as a deputation through the greater part of the province of Ulster. He was then in the enjoyment of good health, and there was no apparent probability of his earthly ministry being so soon afterwards terminated in death. The author retains the most grateful recollection of the Christian affection which marked his farewell, on taking his departure, after a short sojourn in this neighbourhood. A member of his family gives the following gratifying information, respecting his dissolution, in a letter to Captain Banks, dated January 6, 1843—exactly twenty-three years after the foregoing communication was written. In the former instance, it was but the favourable opinion of an erring fellow-mortal, expressed to the primate of the province in which he ministered to the Lord; and when the following extracts were penned, he, as a faithful servant, had, no doubt, received his everlasting reward, from the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls:—

"Kilcolgan Vicarage, January 6, 1843.

"Dear Sir—I regret that it is my painful duty to inform you of our sad bereavement. My beloved father, on Tuesday last, unexpectedly fell asleep in the arms of that blessed Saviour, whom it was his privilege and chief pleasure to proclaim to poor perishing sinners. He died depending *alone* on the finished salvation of our precious Redeemer. He was more than five weeks ill, and his sufferings were

very great from an abscess in his leg, which was opened on Tuesday morning last. At first, we were in the greatest delight at the relief he got; but he was suddenly seized with a weakness, which terminated fatally within an hour. We have lost the tenderest and fondest of parents; but we do not sorrow as others who have no hope. Just before the operation, he said—‘If the Lord will, he can bless the means about to be used; but it is far better to depart, and be with Christ.’”

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The author considers that the solemnity of feeling connected with such a death-bed scene, is the most desirable frame of mind for the reader to close this memoir; and will merely add, that nothing demonstrates more clearly the infinite power and wisdom of God, than the progressive accomplishment of his gracious purposes towards a fallen world, notwithstanding the successive removals of the earthly instruments which he condescends to employ. When institutions, established for the promotion of his glory, or individuals labouring in his vineyard, have performed their respective work, it is his sole prerogative to prepare other agents to occupy their vacated positions: and may He exercise it, until his ever-blessed name be hallowed, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof; and his will be known and done in earth, as it is in heaven.

THE END.

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